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*Why War Was
Not Prevented*

*A Documentary Review
of the
Soviet-British-French
Talks in Moscow, 1939*

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FOREWORD

Although thirty years have passed since the Second World War began, the suffering and torture it caused can never be forgotten. Millions today are seeking the answers to questions about the war and, above all, whether the war could have been averted by setting up a collective front in defence of peace.

Germany, Italy and Japan's aggressive actions in the 1930s were leading to another world war. The human and material resources of the states threatened by the Hitlerites and other predators by far exceeded those of the aggressors. Why then did they not pool their efforts to check the Nazi aggressors, to prevent the Second World War?

This question is naturally of great concern to Soviet people who suffered most during the war and bore the brunt of the war effort.

Various aspects of this problem are discussed in many books and articles abroad. Some Western historians present a false picture of the past events. A number of authors go all out to whitewash the British and French participants in the Munich deal, to absolve the British and French Governments of guilt for the failure of the Moscow talks in 1939. Moreover, attempts are made to blame the Soviet Union, the only consistent fighter for peace at that time, for the commencement of the war.

These allegations, by no means new, were once refuted in *Falsifiers of History*, a comprehensive historical survey. Despite everything, imperialist circles, the militarist and revanchist forces still stubbornly seek to distort the past. They are driven by the need to justify their current policies fraught with the danger of another, immeasurably more destructive war. This is what makes us review events on the eve of the war. Ample documentary evidence and numerous new items from archives will help give the reader a true picture of those events.

1. The Tripartite Talks Begin

POLICY OF "APPEASEMENT"—CONNIUANCE AT AGGRESSION

From the beginning of the 1930s when dangerous hotbeds of war were being created in various parts of the world, the Soviet government pursued a persistent struggle for the creation of a reliable system of collective security against potential aggressors.

We have but to recall the Soviet proposal to reach mutual agreement on the definition of aggression (1933), the signing of the Eastern Pact (1933-35), the Soviet Union's persistent struggle for peace and security in the League of Nations, particularly in connection with Japanese aggression in China, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and the German-Italian intervention in Spain, and the Soviet government's unflagging readiness to join other interested countries in defending the freedom and independence of Czechoslovakia in 1938.

Soviet proposals to curb aggression, however, failed to win the support of the ruling circles in the West, in Great Britain above all.

The ruling circles of Great Britain certainly saw the dangers inherent in the revival of German militarism, but Chamberlain, Halifax and

the British foreign policy-makers they represented chose to shut their eyes to German aggression in the hope that Britain would be able to "buy off" the German aggressors by sacrificing the independence of small Central and East European countries. They understood that this would lead to a stronger Third Reich and thereby to a greater threat to the British Empire itself, but they hoped that the Nazis, having been given freedom of action in Central and Eastern Europe, would continue their aggression in the East and attempt to seize the Ukraine and other Soviet territory. The British ruling circles hoped that this would lead to what they had been dreaming of for a long time—a war between Germany and the Soviet Union.

The culmination of this treacherous policy was the disastrous Munich deal between Britain and France on the one hand and Germany and Italy on the other. Hitler was given freedom of action in Eastern Europe in exchange for his promise not to attack Great Britain and France. The Anglo-French Munichmen hoped that Hitler would take advantage of the new situation by attacking the USSR. For their part, they reduced their relations with the USSR practically to nought after Munich, hoping to force our country into international isolation. They questioned the further existence of the Soviet-French and Soviet-Czechoslovak mutual aid treaties and substituted a "four-power directorate" (Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy) for the League of Nations of which the Soviet Union was a member, and whose Covenant provided for aid to victims of aggression. Thus, the British and French ruling circles gave the Nazis to under-

stand that they did not intend to interfere with their aggression against the USSR.

In the report of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party at the 18th Party Congress on March 10, 1939, outlining the Soviet Union's international position, Stalin stated that Italy, Germany and Japan had already started a new imperialist war by their aggressive acts. In 1935, Italy seized Abyssinia; in the summer of 1936, Germany and Italy organised armed intervention in Spain; in 1937, Japan invaded Northern and Central China; in the beginning of 1938, Germany annexed Austria, and in the autumn of the same year seized the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia.

Moreover, the report stressed, the aggressor nations were seriously infringing the interests of non-aggressor nations, particularly Great Britain, France and the USA, yet the latter kept retreating, making concession after concession to the aggressor. The chief reason for these concessions was that the governments of these powers refused to adopt a policy of collective security and adhered, instead, to a policy of non-interference.

This policy, the report stressed, was connivance at aggression. The policy of non-interference was obviously motivated by the desire not to hinder the aggressors, "not to hinder, say, Japan, from becoming involved in a war with China, or better still with the Soviet Union; not to hinder, say, Germany from getting bogged down in her European adventures, from getting involved in a war with the Soviet Union; to give all the participants a chance to sink deep into

the mire of war, to encourage them in this on the quiet, to let them weaken and exhaust each other and then, when they are sufficiently weakened, to appear fresh on the scene, to appear, of course, 'in the interests of peace' and to dictate their conditions to the weakened participants in the war.

"Cheap and sweet!"

The report warned, in this connection, that it was essential "to be careful not to let our country be drawn into conflicts by war provocateurs who are accustomed to having someone else pull chestnuts out of the fire."

The report outlined the foreign policy of the USSR as follows:

"1. We stand for peace and the strengthening of business ties with all countries. We stand and will continue to stand on this position as long as these countries adhere to the same relations with the Soviet Union, as long as they do not try to violate our country's interests.

"2. We stand for peaceful, close and good-neighbourly relations with all neighbouring countries having common borders with the USSR. We stand and will stand on this position as long as these countries adhere to the same relations with the Soviet Union, as long as they do not try to infringe, directly or indirectly, the safety and inviolability of the borders of the Soviet state.

"3. We stand for supporting the peoples who have become victims of aggression and who are fighting for the independence of their homeland.

"4. We do not fear threats coming from aggressors and are prepared to respond with a double blow for every blow dealt by any instigators

of war trying to violate the sanctity of the Soviet borders".¹

Another sharp condemnation of the aggressive acts of Germany, Italy and Japan was made at the same congress by Manuilsky. He pointed out that the aggressive powers "are exploiting the servility of the ruling circles of Great Britain and France and are making them accomplices in their crimes..." "The plan of the British reactionary bourgeoisie," Manuilsky said, "is to turn Germany towards the East—against the USSR—by sacrificing the small nations of Southeastern Europe to German fascism; to try through such a counter-revolutionary war to block further achievements of socialism and the victory of communism in the USSR and to buy off German imperialist claims to British colonies. At the same time, British reaction would like to use the Soviet Union to draw the teeth of German imperialism to weaken Germany for many years, preserving for British imperialism its dominating position in Europe..." Noting that the Munich deal was the first serious attempt to put this insidious plan into practice, he went on to say that the Munich conspirators had freed the hands of the aggressors.²

Polish Ambassador in London Raczinski, familiar with this policy of the British ruling circles, wrote to his government on March 29, 1939 that the British backers of German "pacification" held the view that "Great Britain should limit herself to the defence of Western Europe, and, naturally, of the British Empire and impe-

¹ Pravda, March 11, 1939.

² Pravda, March 12, 1939.

rial communications. On the other hand, Central and Eastern Europe should be a sphere of German expansion... It was anticipated that the situation would lead to war between Russia and Germany, which would weaken them both and not be without direct advantages for the Western powers."³

Nazi Germany, having attained a dominating position in Central Europe as a result of the Munich Agreement, set out in the spring of 1939 on an even more aggressive course. German troops occupied Czechoslovakia on March 15 and eliminated her as an independent state.

The Soviet government reacted sharply to this new act of aggression. On March 18, it sent the German government a note stating that Germany's actions "cannot be judged other than arbitrary, forcible and aggressive," that they had "destroyed political stability in Central Europe, increased the elements of alarm already created earlier in Europe and struck a new blow to the peoples' feeling of security." In view of the above, the note continued, the Soviet government could not recognise the inclusion of Czechoslovakia in the German Reich.⁴

After seizing Czechoslovakia, the Nazis increased their pressure on Rumania and then on Poland.

The aggressive acts of Nazi Germany now posed a serious threat to the security of the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, there were signs that Germany

might direct her next blow not at the East, but at the West. The Trans-Carpathian Ukraine, which had earlier been regarded by the reactionary ruling circles of Britain and France as a suitable spring-board for German forces to invade the Ukraine, was seized, with the blessing of the German government, by Horthy's Hungary. At the same time, Germany once again began making demands for the return of her former colonies, which had gone to Great Britain and France as a result of the First World War.

MUNICHMEN CHANGE TACTICS

These circumstances caused increasing alarm in Britain, and even more in France. French Ambassador to Germany Coulondre, for example, stated in a letter dated March 19, 1939, that it was not impossible that Germany—in keeping with the classical doctrine of the German General Staff and the views outlined by Hitler in *Mein Kampf*—before going East, might first turn to the West in order to crush France.⁵

The alarm that gripped the ruling circles of Great Britain and France was described in dispatches reaching Moscow from the Soviet Embassies in the two countries.

The Soviet Embassy in Paris informed the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on March 26, 1939, that the initiators of the Munich policy were forced to admit that "Britain and France were duped and deceived at Munich and the Munich Agreement ended up being just

³ *Auswärtiges Amt. Polnische Dokumente zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges.* Berlin, 1940, p. 80.

⁴ *Izvestia*, March 20, 1939.

⁵ *Documents Diplomatiques 1938-1939*, Paris, 1939, p. 89.

as much a scrap of paper as all previous papers bearing Germany's signature." Munich had been represented "as the end to German claims in Europe, as the establishment of new forms of cooperation between the two competing axes. The action of March 15 dispelled all these illusions and shattered the edifice built at Munich."

Whereas Germany's seizure of East European countries had earlier been seen as preparation for an advance against the USSR, "it is now necessary to give an ear to the diametrically opposite opinion." It was assumed that having received in these countries wheat, oil and other resources he needed, Hitler "will lose all economic interest in the Ukraine" and would not want to risk war with the USSR. "That he considers war with the USSR a risk, and no small risk is an opinion expressed by absolutely everyone here. And this is a sign of the times." The Soviet Ambassador to France, Surits, further reported that "the opinion becoming predominant here is that the next German blow will be struck at the West and that it will be France that will bear the brunt of this blow."⁶

The Soviet Ambassador in London, Maisky meanwhile observed that the ruling conservative group of Great Britain had willingly given Hitler a "free hand" in Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe in exchange for a certain amount of "Western security." The Ambassador's dispatch to Moscow reported that the British press had begun an intensive rumour campaign immediately after Munich to the effect that Hitler

would go East and that his next big objective was the Ukraine. But Chamberlain and his supporters were in for a bitter disappointment. Wanting to avoid a really big war, Hitler did not risk starting a war against the USSR and "began applying pressure on the West."⁷

Despite the fact that Hitler had cynically deceived Britain and France soon after Munich, the ruling circles of those countries continued to pursue essentially the same policy of connivance with the aggressor and prodding him on to the East.

People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Litvinov wrote to the Soviet Ambassador in London on March 19, 1939, that the Czechoslovak events had evidently stirred public opinion in both Great Britain and France, but that it nevertheless must be anticipated that "Chamberlain and Daladier will again defend the Munich line. They have by no means given up yet." Although what had happened in Czechoslovakia and the ultimatum to Rumania may have disturbed Chamberlain and Daladier a little, these events nonetheless "fully coincide with their fond visions of Germany moving towards the East."⁸

To continue their Munich policy with better chances of success, Britain and France sought ways to make Hitler more tractable. For one thing, they began to make a show of strengthening their political and military ties with Poland, Turkey, Greece and other countries.

They also began to pretend they were ready for a "rapprochement" with the USSR. This was

⁶ *Archives of the Foreign Policy of the USSR*—later referred to here as *A.F.P. USSR*.

⁷ *A.F.P. USSR*, letter of February 25, 1939.

⁸ *A.F.P. USSR*.

only a diplomatic manoeuvre on their part, for they had no desire for genuine cooperation with the Soviet Union in curbing the Nazi aggressors and made no real moves towards it. Both the British and French governments looked upon their contacts with the USSR primarily as a *lever to apply pressure* on Germany. Dirksen, the German Ambassador in London, observed that "Britain is seeking to strengthen herself and put herself on a level with the axis by arming and acquiring allies, but at the same time she wants to come to an amicable agreement with Germany through negotiations."⁹

Britain and France saw their ties with the East European countries and their contacts with the USSR as *a kind of counter-insurance* in the event that their attempts to negotiate with Hitler proved fruitless and they found themselves at war with Germany. The Soviet Ambassador in France wrote to Moscow on March 26, 1939: "It is not necessary, I think, to remind anyone that the best way out for the Munichmen is to involve us in a war with Germany." "But," the letter said, "if despite all their efforts, war breaks out somewhere else, and if the aggressor, instead of moving in the direction pointed out to him by the Munichmen, actually attacks the Munichmen themselves, then, of course, they will accept assistance from the USSR, too."¹⁰

That this was the case is corroborated by other diplomatic documents as well. The German Ambassador in London, Dirksen, for example, also

⁹ *Documents and Materials on the Eve of the Second World War* later referred to here as *Documents*, Vol. II, 1948 p. 206.

¹⁰ *A.F.P. USSR*.

remarked at that time that as far as the British government was concerned "ties with other states are but *a reserve*" and that "these ties will be broken as soon as the only important and worthy goal has been reached—agreement with Germany."¹¹

The British and French governments were also confronted with growing dissatisfaction at home—growing popular demand for urgent measures against the increasing threat of aggression.

Despite the appearance of certain new elements in Anglo-French diplomacy in the spring of 1939, the Soviet government, drawing on past experience, understood full well the double game being played by Chamberlain and Daladier. Nevertheless, it was still ready to cooperate with Britain and France if their policy actually changed. Outlining the position of the USSR, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs wrote in a letter of March 20, 1939: "The Soviet Union is in a better position than any other country to provide for the defence of its own borders, but it still does not refuse to cooperate with other countries. It conceives of such cooperation only in terms of joining in actual common efforts to resist the aggressors."¹²

The Soviet government believed that the only thing that could still stop the aggressors and prevent a war was genuine and effective cooperation between the USSR, Great Britain, France and other countries threatened with German aggression. This cooperation, it felt, could guarantee peace and security in Europe and beyond it.

¹¹ *Documents*, Vol. II, p. 142 (Our italics). Ed.

¹² *A.F.P. USSR*.

During the whole course of the talks between the USSR, Great Britain and France in the spring and summer of 1939, the Soviet government sought to establish a firm basis for equitable and mutually acceptable agreements to stop further aggression in Europe and prevent the world from slipping into war. The positions taken by the British and French governments, however, impeded efforts at establishing a reliable united peace front. By adhering to their policy of appeasement, the ruling circles of Great Britain and France virtually kept the way clear for Nazi Germany to unleash a new world war.

THE SOVIET UNION FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

On March 17, 1939, Rumanian envoy to London Tilea informed British Foreign Minister Halifax that in the last few days Germany had demanded exclusive rights to purchase Rumanian exports. The Rumanian government viewed these demands as very much resembling an ultimatum, said Tilea, and wanted to know what the British government's position would be if Rumania became a victim of German aggression. He said if it was possible to form a bloc consisting of Poland, Rumania, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia, and if this bloc was supported by Great Britain and France, the situation could be saved.¹³

¹³ *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Third Series* (later referred to here as *D.B.F.P.*) Vol. IV, pp. 366-367.

It was later disclosed that Tilea raised this question

Halifax immediately sent telegrams to British diplomatic representatives in France, Poland, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia, informing them of Tilea's proposal and asking them to find out what views the respective governments had on this question.¹⁴

Halifax also informed Seeds, the British Ambassador in Moscow, of Tilea's inquiry. He instructed Seeds to ask the Soviet government whether it would be able to provide Rumania with assistance against German aggression were the Rumanian government to ask for it.¹⁵

The next day, March 18, 1939, Halifax spoke to the Soviet Ambassador in Great Britain and told him that the Rumanian envoy in London, Tilea, had spoken to him about Germany's ultimatum to Rumania and "asked him about British aid to Rumania in the event of aggression by Germany." The Soviet Ambassador wrote in a dispatch to Moscow: "Halifax promised Tilea that he would discuss the problem immediately with the British government and then give him an answer. Before making its decision, however, the British government would like to ascertain the position of the USSR on this question. It is interested in knowing whether Rumania can count on assistance from the USSR in the event of German aggression, in what form and on what scale (that is, could she count on

on his own initiative without any instructions from his government (the Rumanian government was prepared to meet the German demands).

¹⁴ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. IV, pp. 360-361.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

only arms and ammunition and so forth, or on more active military support.)" ¹⁶

On the same day, Seeds approached the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR with a similar inquiry. To the statement that the British government, before coming to a decision, wanted to find out whether the Soviet government was prepared to provide assistance to Rumania, the People's Commissar answered that the Soviet Government might also feel the need, before answering his question, "to know the position of others, including Great Britain, yet Halifax's inquiry contains no indications on this score." ¹⁷

It should also be noted that whereas the British government had informed all the other governments interested of the fact that Tilea had suggested the creation of a bloc consisting of Poland, Rumania, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia, to be supported by Great Britain and France, it concealed this most important piece of information from the Soviet government. Furthermore, the other interested governments were asked simply to *express their views*, whereas the question as put to the Soviet government concerned unilateral *military support* to be given by the Soviet Union to Rumania.

The British government's position in respect of Rumania was set forth in a talk between Halifax and the US Ambassador in London, Kennedy: Halifax admitted that he was not sure whether Chamberlain and the British government wanted to include Rumania among the countries

in whose defence Great Britain was ready to go to war. ¹⁸

In the evening of March 18, Seeds was summoned to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and told that "nothing will come of questions posed by one government about the position of the other and, therefore, a joint consultation is needed." *The Soviet government proposed the immediate convocation of a conference of representatives of the USSR, Great Britain, France, Poland, Rumania and Turkey.*

In response, "Seeds said that he had just received a copy of a telegram sent to London by the British envoy in Bucharest, who asked that all action be suspended. Seeds does not understand what this means and thinks that the Rumanian envoy in Britain must have got something confused." ¹⁹ Seeds' statement amounted to a withdrawal of the British inquiry to the Soviet government.

On March 20, the Soviet government's proposal was transmitted to the French government as well. ²⁰

¹⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers* (later referred to here as F.R.U.S.), 1939, Vol. I, p. 99. Telegram from Kennedy to the US State Department, dated March 24, 1939.

¹⁹ A.F.P. USSR.

When Hoare, the British envoy in Bucharest, received word of the inquiries sent out by Halifax, he immediately went to the Rumanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he was told that Tilea had done this "in an excess of zeal..." Hoare then asked Halifax to rescind the instructions given to Seeds and other British representatives abroad (*D.B.F.P.*, Vol. IV, pp. 369-370).

²⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁶ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

The Soviet proposal for a six-power conference was declined by the British government.

On March 19, 1939, the Soviet Ambassador in London reported to the People's Commissariat that Halifax had informed him that he had already consulted the Prime Minister on the question of the proposed conference and "they concluded that such an action would be premature."²¹

Summing up the events of the previous week in a dispatch dated March 20, the Soviet Ambassador informed Moscow that anti-German feelings in Great Britain were stronger than ever before and that there was great desire of the people for cooperation with the USSR and for the formation of a bloc of peaceful nations. However, the dispatch stressed, these factors should not be overestimated. "As long as Chamberlain remains at the head of the government, it should not be anticipated that there will be any substantial change in the British foreign policy line. It is true that the Prime Minister has completely failed in his Munich policy and that his prestige has suffered a severe blow, but in his heart he is without doubt still ready to play the same old tune, and it is only public opinion that prevents him from doing so. Consequently, Chamberlain is playing for time and manoeuvring."²²

A STEP FORWARD, A STEP BACKWARD

On March 19, 1939, Halifax told the Soviet Ambassador in London that he wanted to sug-

²¹ A.F.P. USSR.

²² A.F.P. USSR.

gest to the USSR, France and Poland "to publish a joint declaration to the effect that all the above-named powers are interested in safeguarding the integrity and sovereignty of the states in Eastern and Southeastern Europe." He explained that he intended also to invite Turkey, Rumania, Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and certain other countries to join in the Declaration.²³

On March 21, Seeds submitted to the People's Commissariat the following draft declaration of the USSR, Great Britain, France and Poland: "We, the undersigned, duly authorised to that effect, hereby declare that, inasmuch as peace and security in Europe are matters of common interest and concern, and since European peace and security may be affected by any action which constitutes a threat to the political independence of any European state, our respective governments hereby undertake immediately to consult together as to what steps should be taken to offer joint resistance to any such action."²⁴

It was quite obvious that the proposed declaration could not serve as a serious means of struggle against the growing threat of aggression, but believing that even such a declaration might at least be a small step towards preserving peace, the Soviet government agreed to accept the British proposal.²⁵

²³ A.F.P. USSR.

²⁴ D.B.F.P., Vol. IV, p. 427.

Seeds later described the document as a "rather academic declaration" (D.B.F.P., Vol. IV, p. 461).

²⁵ On March 26, Deputy head of the P.C.F.A. Potyomkin told the Rumanian envoy, Dianu, that the "Soviet government accepted the British-sponsored declaration, although it was ineffective in its present form" (A.F.P. USSR).

On the day following reception of the British draft, the Soviet government expressed its readiness to sign the declaration. On March 22, the P.C.F.A. (People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs) informed Seeds as follows: "We express our solidarity with the British government's position and accept the wording of its draft declaration. Representatives of the Soviet government will sign the declaration without delay as soon as France and Poland accept the British proposal and promise their signatures." The Soviet government suggested that in order to make the document "especially solemn and binding" it should be signed by the Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of the four powers. It also suggested that an invitation to join in the declaration be made not only to the Balkan countries mentioned by Halifax, but also to Finland and the Baltic and Scandinavian countries.²⁶

Meanwhile, Nazi aggression was spreading to other regions of Europe. On March 21, 1939, the German government confronted Poland with the question of turning Danzig over to Germany and laying a "corridor" to Eastern Prussia through Polish territory. On March 22, the Nazis forced Lithuania to hand over her Klaipeda (Memel) region. On the next day, Rumania signed an unequal economic agreement with Germany. Nevertheless, "difficulties arose" in the matter of issuing the declaration proposed by Great Britain.

On March 23, British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Cadogan told the Soviet Ambassador in London that there was no answer yet from Warsaw on the question of signing the de-

claration, but that in preliminary talks the Poles had indicated that there were "two points that cause them to hesitate: a) by signing the declaration, Poland would join in an anti-German front, but in return gets only vague promises of consultation; b) inasmuch as the declaration will also be signed by the USSR, it gives the impression that Poland is joining a specific 'ideological front'."²⁷

On March 23, the US Ambassador in Warsaw, Biddle, sent a telegram to the State Department indicating that Poland, who had a pact with Rumania against the USSR, did not intend to come to the aid of her ally, Rumania, in the event the latter was involved in a war with Germany.²⁸

Reporting on the Polish and Rumanian positions at that time, US Ambassador in London Kennedy wrote on March 24 that "considerable doubt emerged as to the willingness of Poland and Rumania to defend themselves against German encroachment or attack." Kennedy also expressed doubts as to "whether His Majesty's government and France really meant business."²⁹

The Soviet government, meanwhile, was making it clear that it was prepared to join in a common front against aggression in close cooperation with Britain and France, as well as with the East European countries threatened.

At the end of March, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs issued a statement to the Latvian and Estonian representatives emphasising

²⁶ A.F.P. USSR.

²⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

²⁸ F.R.U.S., 1939, Vol. I, pp. 96-97.

²⁹ D.B.F.P., Vol. IV, p. 499.

ing the immense importance the USSR attached to preventing the aggressors from dominating the Baltic republics counter to the vital interests of the Soviet Union as well as of the Baltic states. The Soviet government declared that it could not remain indifferent to German domination over the Baltic region and would show this by acts if necessary.³⁰

Meanwhile, the Rumanian envoy in Moscow, Dianu, was informed that the USSR could not "remain indifferent were an aggressive country to gain domination in Rumania or be provided with bases near our borders or in Black Sea ports."³¹

On March 29, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, in reply to an inquiry made by the French Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow J. Payart, concerning the USSR's readiness to cooperate with Poland, informed him: "We consider cooperation with Poland, which we have always offered her, very important."³²

The establishment of cooperation between the USSR and its Western neighbours did not, however, depend only on the good will of the Soviet government.

On March 29, 1939, Cadogan informed the Soviet Ambassador that "the Poles quite categorically, and the Rumanians somewhat less decisively have announced that they will not join any

combination (be it in the form of a declaration or any other) that also includes the USSR. Moreover, they made it clear that a 'consultation' in no way accommodates them and that they can join a peace bloc only if there are firm military commitments from Great Britain and France."³³

On April 1, 1939, the People's Commissar, in a talk with British Ambassador Seeds, expressed "bewilderment that, after Britain on her own initiative has approached us with a proposal for a joint declaration and after we have given our affirmative reply, there has been no further official word concerning the fate of this undertaking." Seeds answered that he "considers the matter of a declaration no longer arises."³⁴

In a letter dated April 4, the People's Commissariat informed the Soviet Ambassador in London that "if the British references to the position taken by Poland are true, then Chamberlain must be indescribably glad to have the opportunity of making such references and of blaming Poland and Rumania for the failure of the declaration and similar undertakings."³⁵

ANGLO-FRENCH "GUARANTEES"

In the meantime, German-Polish relations were becoming severely strained. On March 28, the German press launched a vicious anti-Polish campaign on the position of the German minority in Poland. Reports began coming in about German

³⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

³¹ A.F.P. USSR.

³² A.F.P. USSR.

At the same time, the People's Commissar expressed apprehension that "it is unlikely that Beck's line of conduct can be changed so long as Germany does not strike a direct blow at Poland."

³³ A.F.P. USSR.

³⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

³⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

troops movements towards the Polish border and about the likelihood that the Germans would seize Danzig within a matter of days. Britain and France could not but take into account that the seizure of Poland would seriously complicate and weaken their position.

On March 29, the British Ambassador in Poland was instructed by his government to inform the Polish government that Germany might launch a direct attack against Poland or undermine her sovereignty "whether by processes of economic penetration or national disintegration, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, or by indirect military pressure." In such an event, the instructions said, Britain and France would be prepared to come to Poland's assistance.³⁶

On March 31, 1939, Chamberlain announced in the House of Commons that "in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence and which the Polish government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish government all support in their power."³⁷

Later that day, the Soviet Ambassador in London met former British Prime Minister Lloyd George, who told him about a talk he had with Chamberlain after the latter had made his speech to the House of Commons. Lloyd George had asked Chamberlain about the participation of the USSR in a bloc of peace-loving powers, to which the Prime Minister had replied that the position

taken by Poland and Rumania so far made the practical involvement of the USSR somewhat difficult.

"Then Lloyd George asked why, under such circumstances, Chamberlain had risked making his statement threatening to involve Britain in a war with Germany. The Prime Minister replied, that, according to information at his disposal, neither the German General Staff nor Hitler would ever risk war if they knew that they would have to fight at the same time on two fronts—the West and the East. Lloyd George then asked just where this 'second front' was. The Prime Minister answered: 'Poland.'³⁸ Lloyd George burst into laughter and began to gibe Chamberlain, explaining that Poland had no air force to speak of, an inadequately mechanised army, worse than mediocre armaments, and that Poland was weak internally, economically and politically.³⁹ Without active help from the USSR, therefore, no 'Eastern front' is possible."

In conclusion, Lloyd George told Chamberlain that since there was no firm agreement with

³⁶ Halifax, too, felt that Britain's chief ally in Eastern Europe had to be Poland and not the USSR (*F.R.U.S.*, 1939, Vol. I, p. 99. Telegram from US Ambassador Kennedy to the State Department, dated March 24, 1939).

³⁷ On April 5, 1939, the British Ambassador in Poland, Kennard, informed Halifax that according to estimates of the British military and naval attachés there, Poland could, in the first three weeks of a war, muster about 54 divisions and about 600 aircraft, three-fourths of which, however, could not compete with the more, modern German aircraft. In the opinion of the military attaché, Kennard wrote, "it seems therefore unlikely that Poland can hope to defend the Corridor or her western frontier..." (*D.B.F.P.*, Vol. V., p. 38).

³⁸ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. IV, p. 516.

³⁹ Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 45, col. 2421.

the USSR, "I consider your statement of today an irresponsible game of chance which can end up very badly."⁴⁰

A letter dated April 4, from the P.C.F.A. to the Soviet Ambassador in London noted that statements by Britain and France, such as the one made by Chamberlain, were unlikely to frighten Hitler or restrain him from carrying out his plans. "Chamberlain's statement was evidently aimed precisely at frightening Hitler, but no one can say whether Britain will really go to war with Germany under the circumstances indicated." It is possible, the letter continued, that by his guarantee Chamberlain "is prompting Hitler to direct his aggression to the northeast. Chamberlain is counting on us to resist occupation of the Baltic region and that this will lead to the Soviet-German confrontation he hopes for."⁴¹

On April 6, as a result of a visit to London by Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Beck, a joint Anglo-Polish communiqué was issued, announcing that agreement had been reached between Britain and Poland to conclude a mutual assistance treaty to take the place of the unilateral British guarantee. In the interim, Poland would assume the same commitments in respect of Britain as Britain had assumed on March 31 in respect of Poland. The communiqué said: "Like the temporary assurance, the permanent agreement would not be directed against any other country but would be designed to assure Great Britain and Poland of mutual assistance in the event of

any threat, direct or indirect, to the independence of either."⁴²

On the same day, the Soviet Ambassador asked Halifax to explain what was meant by the section of the communiqué which referred to aid being given "in the event of any threat, direct or indirect," to the sovereignty of one of the two sides. Halifax evaded an answer to this question. During the course of the talk, the British Minister declared that the communiqué "in its further development may also include concrete talks be-

⁴² *Documents on International Affairs, 1939-1946, Vol. 1, London, 1951, p. 129.*

A preliminary draft of the Anglo-Polish Mutual Assistance Treaty was prepared during the Anglo-Polish talks in London. It revealed in detail what was meant by the "direct or indirect" threat referred to in the communiqué. The draft read:

"The Polish government and His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom have decided to place their collaboration on a permanent basis by the exchange of reciprocal assurances of assistance. They are accordingly prepared to enter into a formal agreement on the following basis:

a) If Germany attacks Poland His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom will at once come to the help of Poland.

b) If Germany attempts to undermine the independence of Poland by processes of economic penetration or in any other way, His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom will support Poland in resistance to such attempts. If Germany then attacks Poland, the provisions of paragraph a) above will apply. In the event of other action by Germany which clearly threatened Polish independence, and was of such a nature that the Polish government considered it vital to resist it with their national forces, His Majesty's government would at once come to the help of Poland.

c) Reciprocally, Poland gives corresponding assurances to the United Kingdom" (*D.B.F.P., Vol. V, p. 47*).

⁴⁰ *A.F.P. USSR.*

⁴¹ *A.F.P. USSR.*

tween the military staffs of the states interested." ⁴³

Having strengthened their political and military cooperation at the end of March and the beginning of April and initiated talks with Poland, Britain and France limited their relations with the Soviet Union to discussions. "Actually," the People's Commissariat wrote to the Soviet Ambassador in Paris on April 11, "in their discussions with us after the episode of the joint declaration, the British and the French have not even hinted at any kind of concrete proposal or any kind of treaty with us. If we decipher these discussions, it becomes clear that what they want is to get some kind of binding promise from us without entering into any agreement with us and without undertaking any commitments in our respect. . . But why should we undertake such unilateral commitments?" ⁴⁴

In the meantime, the situation in Southeast Europe took a sharp turn for the worse. On April 7, 1939, Italian troops invaded Albania. The British ruling circles were now deeply concerned about their positions in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly Greece and Turkey.

The Soviet Embassy in London informed Moscow on April 9 that the British government was discussing the question of offering Greece and Turkey the same guarantees as had been given to Poland. The question of guarantees to Rumania, however, was being delayed. The impression was, the dispatch stressed, that the British government was seeking some "plausible pretext to

make impossible, or at least to delay as long as possible, any guarantees to Rumania, and thus leave Hitler a free 'corridor' through Hungary and Rumania to the borders of the USSR. Chamberlain and Bonnet evidently have not given up hopes of pushing Hitler towards the Soviet Ukraine." ⁴⁵

On April 10, the British government decided to offer guarantees to Greece. The French government was also prepared to give Greece its guarantees and even to extend them to Rumania, and began to encourage Britain to do the same. ⁴⁶ The British government finally agreed.

On April 13, 1939, Chamberlain and Daladier announced that in the event of a threat to the sovereignty of Greece or Rumania, the governments of Great Britain and France would immediately assist them in every possible way. Daladier also announced that the French and Polish governments had reaffirmed the existing Franco-Polish alliance. He said: "France and Poland guarantee each other immediately and directly against any threat, direct or indirect, to their vital interests." ⁴⁷

More and more new acts of aggression by Nazi Germany and fascist Italy were making the situation in Europe increasingly critical and causing deep concern in many countries. Concern was felt widely in Great Britain, yet the Chamberlain government stubbornly stuck to its former short-sighted political course.

⁴³ A.F.P. USSR.

⁴⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

⁴⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

⁴⁶ D.B.F.P., Vol. V, pp. 95, 105.

⁴⁷ Documents on International Affairs, 1939-1946, Vol. I, pp. 201-202.

In a letter to Moscow on April 9, 1939, the Soviet Embassy in London wrote that Chamberlain "has not changed" and "his new 'gestures' in the sphere of foreign policy have been prompted only by pressure from public opinion." "Chamberlain understands that in order to avoid a catastrophe for his cabinet he must now, at least to some extent, take cover behind the mood of the masses while playing for time until circumstances allow him (if they do) to return to his policy of 'pacification', even if only in a somewhat modified form."⁴⁸

Anxiety was mounting not only in Britain, but also in France. The Soviet Embassy in Paris wrote to Moscow on April 11 that in France "everyone is now convinced that war is inevitable." Many felt that "at a time like this, aid should no longer be rejected, no matter where it comes from and that the Soviet Union should no longer be ignored." The Embassy letter said that "the French government cannot avoid taking these feelings into consideration."⁴⁹

French and British guarantees to Poland, Rumania and Greece could not prevent new German acts of aggression. On this question, the Soviet Ambassador in Britain wrote: "What can Britain (or even Britain and France together) actually do for Poland and Rumania if Germany attacks them? Very little. By the time a British blockade becomes a serious threat to Germany, Poland and Rumania will have ceased to exist."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ A.F.P. USSR.

⁴⁹ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

In the prevailing situation, demands in Britain and France for cooperation with the USSR became more and more persistent.

On April 7, French Minister for Foreign Affairs Bonnet told the Soviet Ambassador in Paris that "military experts are convinced that a German attack is imminent; it is impossible to know in advance, of course, against whom the major blow will be struck, but most probably she will try to seize Rumania and possibly part of Poland before she attempts a decisive confrontation with the USSR or France." Bonnet said that it would be desirable to begin consultations between the USSR and France "to determine what measures they should take in the event of Germany attacking Rumania and Poland."⁵¹

On April 10, the People's Commissariat instructed the Soviet Ambassador to inform Bonnet as follows: "In connection with the threatened position of Rumania, the Soviet government has already responded to a proposal made by the British government to call a conference—a conference that failed to take place through no fault of the Soviet government. The Soviet government also responded affirmatively to the British government's concrete proposal for a joint four-power declaration, but the declaration, again through no fault of the Soviet government, was not signed." Although Poland and Rumania have not appealed to the Soviet government for help, the letter said, "the Soviet government continues to stand ready to hear and study any concrete proposals."⁵²

⁵¹ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵² A.F.P. USSR.

On April 14, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs proposed that the USSR and France should exchange letters with the following content:

"In the event of France finding herself in a state of war with Germany as a consequence of her providing assistance to Poland or Rumania the USSR shall provide France with immediate assistance and support.

"In the event of the USSR finding itself in a state of war with Germany as a consequence of its providing aid to Poland or Rumania, France shall provide the USSR with immediate assistance and support.

"Both governments shall without delay coordinate the forms of such aid and shall take every measure to guarantee its full effectiveness." ⁵³

These letters, Bonnet said, should supplement the Soviet-French Treaty of 1935. At the same time, Bonnet "kept repeating that he himself did not consider the proposal to be 'ideal', but that he could not think of anything else at the moment and hoped that Moscow would help him by itself suggesting something." ⁵⁴

On April 11, the Soviet Ambassador in London sent a wire to Moscow informing it that Halifax had talked with him and had broached the question of British guarantees to Greece, Turkey and Rumania. "With respect to Rumania, the Ambassador wrote, 'Halifax again asked me in what form the USSR could offer aid to Rumania in the event of her being attacked by Germany.'" ⁵⁵

⁵³ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵⁵ A.F.P. USSR

The People's Commissariat replied on April 13 with instructions to inform Halifax that "we, too, are not indifferent to Rumania's fate and would like to know what forms of assistance Britain envisages coming from Great Britain as well as from other interested powers, and that we are prepared to take part in giving such assistance." ⁵⁶

On the next day, April 14, this statement was given to Halifax who, later, informing the British Ambassador in Moscow about it, said that it "is of great value." ⁵⁷

While the Soviet government proceeded from the proposition that Britain and the USSR should adopt joint measures to render assistance to Rumania, the British government continued its efforts to get the USSR to make unilateral commitments.

Without answering the questions contained in the Soviet statement, the British government sent the following note to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs through its Moscow Ambassador Seeds.

"His Majesty's government have noted Mr. Stalin's recent statement that the Soviet Union stands for the rendering of support to nations which are victims of aggression and which fight for their independence. It would therefore be in complete accord with this policy were the Soviet government now to make a public declaration on their own initiative in which, after referring to the general statement of policy alluded to above and to statements recently made by His Majesty's government and the French govern-

⁵⁶ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵⁷ D.B.F.P., Vol. V., p. 202. ✕

ment, they would repeat that in the event of an act of aggression against any European neighbour of the Soviet Union which was resisted by the country concerned, the assistance of the Soviet government would be available, if desired, and would be afforded in such manner as would be found most convenient."

In connection with the questions asked by the British government, the People's Commissariat drew Seeds' attention to the fact that there was no answer to the Soviet government's question about how the British government envisaged aid to Rumania by Great Britain and the USSR. "The British government," the People's Commissar said, "evidently prefers abstract declarations of principle to more precise commitments to previously coordinated forms of assistance."⁵⁸

On April 16, the French Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow, Payart, citing instructions from Bonnet, told Deputy of the People's Commissar Potyomkin that the French government subscribed to the British démarche, but that this should not be construed as a withdrawal of its own proposals, which remained in force.⁵⁹

On the same day, the People's Commissar replied to Seeds's inquiry, saying that the British government's statement about guarantees was too general and gave no indication what measures Britain considered it possible to take against Germany. It was doubtful that Britain could send contingents of troops to Rumania. Of course, Great Britain could declare war on Germany and declare a blockade. Was this what the Br-

⁵⁸ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵⁹ A.F.P. USSR.

tish statement meant? What would France do? What would Poland do? What kind of assistance could be expected of the Soviet Union? "Before we make any formal and public commitments," the People's Commissar said, "we would like to know just what we are talking about. Neither do we know what is taking place between Germany and Rumania, between Germany and Poland, and why Gafenco is going to Berlin. Will he do there what Hacha and Urbsys did—capitulate and make fools of all the guarantors?"⁶⁰

In studying the British inquiry, the Soviet government also noted that this inquiry anticipated Soviet guarantees to all the Baltic countries, and moreover, whereas Poland and Rumania already had British and French guarantees, the British inquiry implied only unilateral Soviet guarantees in respect of the Baltic countries.⁶¹

The Soviet government could not overlook the possibility that its acceptance of the British proposal might lead to a situation in which the Soviet Union, in carrying out its commitments, would be drawn into war with Germany, while Great Britain could actually avoid taking part.

SOVIET PROPOSALS (APRIL 17, 1939)

On April 17, the following Soviet proposals were conveyed to Seeds:⁶²

⁶⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

⁶¹ A.F.P. USSR, letter from the People's Commissariat to the Soviet Embassy in France, dated April 19, 1939.

⁶² The Soviet Embassy in France informed the French Foreign Ministry of this proposal on April 18.

"1. Great Britain, France and the USSR conclude a 5-10 year agreement, committing themselves to render each other immediately all manner of, including military, assistance, in the event of aggression in Europe against any of the parties to the agreement.

"2. Great Britain, France and the USSR pledge all-round, including military, assistance to the East European states situated between the Baltic and Black seas and bordering on the USSR, in the event of aggression against these states.

"3. Great Britain, France and the USSR pledge to discuss and define with all possible haste, the scope and forms of military assistance to be rendered by each of these states in carrying out Points 1 and 2.

"4. The British government makes it clear that the aid it has promised Poland relates exclusively to aggression on the part of Germany.

"5. The existing treaty of alliance between Poland and Rumania is declared binding only in the event of aggression against Poland and Rumania, or is cancelled altogether as being directed against the USSR.

"6. Great Britain, France and the USSR pledge, after the beginning of military operations, not to enter into any negotiations and not to conclude peace with the aggressors separately from each other or without the mutual agreement of all three powers.

"7. This agreement will be signed simultaneously with the covenant to be worked out in accordance with Point 3.

"8. The necessity is acknowledged for Great Britain, France and the USSR to enter jointly

into negotiations with Turkey for a special mutual assistance agreement."⁶³

When this proposal was presented to Seeds, it was explained, with regard to Point 3, that "mutual assistance pacts not reinforced with a corresponding precise definition of military commitments, often fail. The absence of such definition in the pacts between the USSR, France and Czechoslovakia undoubtedly played a negative role in the fate of Czechoslovakia."⁶⁴

It should also be noted, that, whereas the British inquiry, concerned only unilateral Soviet guarantees to the Baltic states, the Soviet proposal stipulated that guarantees to these countries be offered by all three powers—Great Britain, France and the USSR.

In its document of April 17, 1939, the Soviet government formulated all the basic proposals it was to try so hard to see implemented in the course of the subsequent political negotiations in the summer of 1939.

The British Embassy in Moscow acknowledged that the Soviet Union had demonstrated readiness for far-reaching cooperation with France and Great Britain.⁶⁵

⁶³ A.F.P. USSR.

⁶⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

⁶⁵ F.R.U.S., 1939, Vol. I. p. 240. ★

2. The Problem of Reciprocity of Commitments

ATTEMPT TO SET THE USSR AND GERMANY AT LOGGERHEADS

The British government showed no haste in responding to the Soviet proposals of April 17, 1939 on an Anglo-Franco-Soviet mutual aid agreement, a military pact and security guarantees to be given to the countries of Eastern Europe.

The Soviet People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs informed its Ambassador in France on April 23 about the lack of response and about Britain probably dragging its feet until Hitler's next speech: "Just in case there is a hint of peace and an excuse to return to Munich positions." "According to information received from Rome," the letter noted, "Hitler and Mussolini are convinced that Chamberlain is negotiating with the USSR only under pressure from the opposition, a few conservatives and public opinion."¹

The French government was somewhat more concerned about the growing belligerence of Germany and Italy, but showed no serious desire to reach a mutually acceptable agreement with the

¹ *A.F.P. USSR.*

USSR. One indication of this was the following proposal submitted by the French government on April 25 to the Soviet Embassy in Paris:

"If France and Great Britain found themselves in a state of war with Germany as a result of the action which they had taken with a view to preventing all changes by force of the existing status quo in Central or Eastern Europe, the USSR would immediately lend them aid and assistance.

"If the USSR found itself in a state of war with Germany as a result of the assistance it had given France and Great Britain under conditions stipulated in the preceding paragraph, France and Great Britain would immediately lend it aid and assistance.

"The three governments would concert without delay on the nature, in both cases contemplated, of this assistance and will take all steps to ensure its full efficacy."²

The French government explained the motivation behind its proposal in a note to the British government, dated April 24, 1939. It said that the French government "no longer consider it possible" to support in Moscow the British proposal for a unilateral Russian declaration of aid, unaccompanied by "some kind of reciprocal guarantees or commitments by the three powers to render each other direct or indirect aid."³

The "reciprocal commitments" of the French draft, however, were a sham; the draft provided for no real reciprocity and no real commitments.

The Soviet Embassy in France wrote to the

² *A.F.P. USSR.*

³ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. V, p. 317. ✕

People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on April 26, 1939, that "mutuality" according to this proposal simply amounts to "our being committed to render assistance to France and Britain in the event of their getting involved in a war as a result of their actions to protect the status quo in Central and Eastern Europe, whereas they would come to our aid, not under comparable circumstances, but only after we were at war with Germany as a result of our coming to the aid to France and Britain, i.e., when France and Britain are already at war with Germany. It turns out that when France and Britain deem it necessary to fight Germany to protect the status quo in Europe we will automatically be drawn into the war on their side, but if we were to defend the same status quo on our own initiative, Britain and France would not be committed to anything. A strange equality."⁴

How the new French proposal was greeted in Moscow is apparent from the inquiry made by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs to the Soviet Ambassador in France on April 26. He was asked to elucidate what East European states were referred to, i.e., whether the Baltic states were included. "The formulation is a mockery," wrote the People's Commissar, "but let us know anyway."⁵

Soviet Ambassador to France Surits met French Foreign Minister Bonnet on April 29 and pointed out the lack of genuine reciprocity in the French proposal. Bonnet, as Surits later informed Moscow, "even feigning a little embarrassment," ex-

plained that because of the pressure of work, he had delegated the job of drawing up this draft to Secretary-General of the French Foreign Ministry Léger,⁶ that he, Bonnet, "had not studied it thoroughly enough" and had to admit that the wording of the proposal was indeed "unfortunate."⁷

Later that same day, the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs sent a revised version of its proposal to the Soviet Embassy.

The first two paragraphs of the proposal now read:

"If France and Great Britain found themselves in a state of war with Germany as a result of the action which they had taken with a view to preventing all changes by force of the existing status quo in Central or Eastern Europe, the USSR would immediately lend them aid and assistance.

"If the USSR found itself in a state of war with Germany as a result of the action which it had taken with a view to preventing all changes by force of the existing status quo in Central or Eastern Europe, France and Great Britain would immediately lend it aid and assistance."⁸

This proposal, however, still disregarded the Soviet proposal of April 17 to conclude a mutual aid pact among the USSR, Britain and France in the event of direct attack on one of the three powers; to have the three powers offer guarantees to the East European states situated be-

⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

⁶ This proposal is referred to in some later documents as the Bonnet-Léger formula.

⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

⁸ A.F.P. USSR.

tween the Baltic and the Black seas⁹; to agree that a separate peace with the aggressor would not be concluded by any of the three powers after military action had begun; and others.

Meanwhile, the situation in Europe was steadily worsening. On April 28, Germany abrogated the Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact of 1934 and demanded that Danzig be ceded to Germany.

The British government, however, continued to adhere to its former course. It still sought Soviet aid but showed no inclination even to discuss the question of Britain's giving aid to the Soviet Union. Léger told American Ambassador in Paris Bullitt that the British government was continuing its efforts to induce the Soviet Union to offer unilateral guarantees to Poland and Rumania, but "was not ready to give any British guarantees whatsoever to the Soviet Union."¹⁰

On May 8, 1939, British Ambassador to Moscow Seeds handed Molotov (who replaced Litvinov as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs on May 3) the following official British proposal:

"It is suggested that the Soviet government should make a public declaration on their own

⁹ Bonnet said that he had in mind extending the three-power guarantees only to Poland, Rumania and Turkey. *A.F.P. USSR*.

¹⁰ *F.R.U.S.*, 1939, Vol. I, p. 244.

Even Bullitt (on May 5) described the British government's position with respect to the USSR as "...the dilatory and almost insulting policy" (*F.R.U.S.*, 1939, Vol. I, p. 248). The French Chargé d'Affaires in the USSR Payart also wrote on May 5 that "from the Soviet point of view," the British position "merely added insult to injury" (*F.R.U.S.*, 1939, Vol. I, p. 250).

initiative in which after referring to the general statement of policy recently made by Mr. Stalin and having regard to the statements recently made by His Majesty's government and the French government accepting new obligations on behalf of certain East European countries, the Soviet government would undertake that in the event of Great Britain and France being involved in hostilities in fulfilment of these obligations, the assistance of the Soviet government would be immediately available if desired and would be afforded in such manner and on such terms as might be agreed."¹¹

In submitting the document, Seeds said that "the French government has been informed of the matter."¹² When the People's Commissar asked him how matters stood on the question of concluding a military agreement, Seeds replied that at that time he could discuss only the proposal offered.¹³

The Soviet Embassy in France wrote to Moscow, describing the British proposal as little different from the French proposal of April 25, and even worse in form. "Although the Bonnet-Léger formula," the letter said, "actually called for unilateral commitments from us, it was at least formulated as an agreement among three count-

¹¹ *A.F.P. USSR*, also published in *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. V., p. 487.

¹² The French Charge d'Affaires in the USSR Payart informed Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Potyomkin on May 14 that his government was convinced that the French proposals were unacceptable to the British and that, therefore, it supported the latest British proposal (*A.F.P. USSR*).

¹³ *A.F.P. USSR*.

ries, and in its concluding part provided (in a veiled way) for establishment of immediate contact among the General Staffs; the British proposal, however, is undoubtedly inspired by an unwillingness to enter into any formal agreement with us, an unwillingness to place their signature next to ours on any document, an unwillingness to go beyond parallel actions. It is even less acceptable to us than the Bonnet-Léger formula. It automatically draws us into war with Germany whenever Britain and France decide to fight Germany because of commitments made by them without our concurrence and without consulting us. They consider it their exclusive right to set the time and other conditions for such a conflict. They relegate to us the role of blind satellite in the combination and refuse to give us guarantees against the possible consequences of our commitment."¹⁴

The People's Commissar wrote to Soviet plenipotentiaries in London and France on May 8, apropos of the British proposal, that the British and French governments demand "unilateral and gratuitous aid with no intention of rendering us equivalent aid." This proposal is very much like the "insulting Bonnet-Léger formula."¹⁵

In a dispatch to the Soviet Ambassadors in Berlin and Rome, the People's Commissar said that the Soviet government did not find the British proposal acceptable because it required that the Soviet Union guarantee, "by unilateral declaration," its aid to Britain and France in the event of war between them and Germany over

Poland and Rumania, but gave no guarantee to the Soviet Union in the event of its being attacked by the aggressor.¹⁶

Soviet Ambassador in London Maisky met with Halifax on May 9, 1939, and, in accordance with instructions received, put the British proposal to criticism. He said that "the proposed British formula is not reciprocal in nature." Halifax finally agreed to consider "some other formula," on the condition, however, that it make explicit that the British government guaranteed Poland and Rumania "on the conditions that (a) there was a direct or indirect threat to their sovereignty and (b) that they themselves offer resistance to the aggressor."¹⁷

In a talk with the Soviet Ambassador on May 11, Halifax added one more stipulation: the Soviet "counter-formulation" must make reference only to Poland and Rumania and not to the Baltic countries."¹⁸

Halifax's readiness to consider "some other formula," however, was not genuine.

Britain, according to its May 8 proposal and the statements made by Halifax, was prepared, in one degree or another, to cooperate with the USSR in resisting aggression only if Germany committed an act of aggression against Poland or Rumania and if the latter offered resistance to the aggressor. But the British government still had no desire to enter into an Anglo-Franco-Soviet mutual aid pact which would commit it to aiding the Soviet Union if the Soviet Union it-

¹⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁶ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁸ A.F.P. USSR.

self was attacked, i.e., in the event of direct aggression against the Soviet Union.

If Germany were to begin aggressive actions in the Baltic region and the Soviet Union were to decide to counter them, Britain intended to stay blithely on the sidelines.

Finally, if the authorities in Poland and Rumania were to allow German troops through their territory without resistance, or even worse, after having agreed to cooperate with the Nazis against the Soviet Union,¹⁹ then under these circumstances, Britain had no intention of cooperating with the Soviet Union and the USSR would have to fight Germany alone.

In this connection, it should also be noted that the political course followed by the rulers of Poland and Rumania of that time could not but cause serious apprehension to the Soviet government.

ANTI-SOVIET POLICY OF POLISH RULERS

As mentioned earlier, the Soviet government's proposals of April 17 provided for British, French and Soviet aid to the countries of Eastern Europe, including Poland.

The Polish government, however, even when under direct threat from Germany, did not alter its anti-Soviet foreign policy. Clear indication of this was found in a letter, dated April 22, from

¹⁹ It may be recalled that the rulers of Rumania of that time later permitted the stationing of German troops on their territory and, in June 1941, together with Germany, declared war on the USSR.

Kobyljanski, Assistant Head of the Political Department of the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to Polish Ambassador in Berlin Lipski. Referring to communications from Polish Ambassador in Japan Romer, dated April 15 and 20, Kobyljanski said that "Japan is interested in Poland's role and is concerned about her anti-Russian position being weakened as a result of her strained relations with Germany." The Polish Foreign Ministry, Kobyljanski wrote, authorised Romer "to inform the Japanese government that there have been no changes in the continuing friendly relations between Poland and Japan which are based on the stable premise of the policy of both governments towards the USSR. This Polish policy has also not undergone any change."²⁰

The Polish government thereby informed Japan unequivocally that its "anti-Russian position" had not changed.

The Soviet government's readiness to render aid to Poland, and the Polish government's unwillingness to cooperate with the USSR in defence against aggression was also brought out sharply during a visit to Poland by Soviet Deputy People's Commissar Potyomkin.

Potyomkin wrote to Moscow that he had talked with Beck on May 10, 1939 and "had emphasised that the USSR would not refuse aid to Poland if she desired it."²¹

On the next day, however, Polish Ambassador in Moscow Grzybowski, acting on orders from his government, informed the People's Commissar that "the French initiative in the negotiations re-

²⁰ Historical-Diplomatic Archives.

²¹ A.F.P. USSR.

garding guarantees to Poland does not accord with the Polish government's point of view" and that "Poland does not consider it possible to conclude a mutual aid pact with the USSR."²²

In view of the short-sighted Polish position, it should not have been surprising that Hitler chose Poland as his next objective. It is now known that Hitler had already ordered preparations for an attack on Poland in the spring. On May 23, at a meeting of German High Command, he announced his decision "to attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity."²³

BASIC CONDITIONS FOR STOPPING AGGRESSION

A detailed analysis of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations appeared on the front page of the May 11 issue of *Izvestia*. "The USSR," the article read, "has felt and continues to feel, that if France and Britain really want to create a barrier to aggression in Europe, the first thing that has to be done is for the four powers—Britain, France, the USSR and Poland or at least the three powers—Britain, France and the USSR, to form a united front, so that these three countries, bound on a reciprocal basis by a mutual aid pact, could provide guarantees to other states in Eastern and Central Europe who are threatened by aggression."

The position of the USSR, based on the principle of reciprocity, the article noted, did not re-

ceive sympathetic response from Britain and France. In her proposals Britain side-stepped the question of a mutual aid pact among France, Britain and the USSR. Moreover, the British proposals placed the USSR in an unequal position, although it had to make the same commitments as France and Britain. "This is not to mention," the article said, "that the question of the actual repulsion of aggression and the time for beginning such action is left entirely up to Britain and France to decide, although the burden of such repulsion would have to fall on the USSR because of its geographical position."

Finally, the article stressed that Britain, France, Poland and Rumania were bound by reciprocal commitments. Not so with the USSR. Without having a mutual aid pact with Britain or Poland, the USSR was committed to rendering aid to these states, yet was to receive no aid from them, meaning that in the event of direct aggression against the USSR, the latter would have only itself to rely on.

On May 14, 1939, the Soviet government sent the British government the following reply to the latter's proposal of May 8:

"The Soviet government have given careful consideration to the latest proposals of the British government which were communicated to it on May 8 and it has come to the conclusion that these proposals cannot serve as a basis for organisation of a front of resistance against a further extension of aggression in Europe.

"This conclusion is based on the following considerations:

"1. The British proposals do not contain the principle of reciprocity with regard to the USSR

²² A.F.P. USSR.

²³ *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik*, 1918-45 (later referred to as A.D.A.P.), Series D. Vol. VI, p. 479.

and place the latter in a position of inequality inasmuch as they do not contemplate an obligation by Britain and France to guarantee the USSR in the event of a direct attack on the latter by aggressors, whereas Britain and France as well as Poland enjoy such a guarantee as a result of reciprocity which exists between them.

"2. The British proposals only extend the guarantee to the East European states bordering on the USSR to Poland and to Rumania, as a consequence of which the northwestern frontier of USSR towards Finland, Estonia and Latvia remains uncovered.

"3. On the one hand, the absence of guarantee to the USSR on the part of Britain and France in the event of a direct attack by aggressors and, on the other hand, the fact that the northwestern frontier of the USSR remains uncovered may serve to provoke aggression in the direction of the Soviet Union.

"The Soviet government consider that there are at least three indispensable conditions for the creation of an effective barrier by the pacific states against a further extension of aggression in Europe:

1. The conclusion between Britain and France and the USSR of an effective pact of mutual assistance against aggression.

2. The guaranteeing by these three Great Powers of the states of Central and Eastern Europe threatened by aggression including also Latvia, Estonia and Finland.

3. The conclusion of a concrete agreement between Britain, France and the USSR as to the forms and the extent of assistance to be rendered to each other and to the guaranteed states, fail-

ing which (without such an agreement) there is a risk that, as the experience of Czechoslovakia proved, pacts of mutual assistance may be ineffective."²⁴

On May 15, the Soviet Ambassador in Paris gave the French Foreign Minister the text of the Soviet government's reply to the British proposal. Having read the reply, Bonnet said that the second condition—extension of guarantees to the Baltic countries—"bothers" him.²⁵

The British reaction was succinctly stated in a letter Halifax wrote on May 16 to the British Ambassador to Japan, informing him of the status of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations: "The Soviet government are still holding out for some closer arrangement than we are disposed to accept."²⁶

The lack of progress in the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations continued to provoke growing concern among the French and British public. In a note to the British on May 16, the French government remarked that if the negotiations are broken off "those surrounding the Führer will advise him to attack Poland."²⁷

On May 19, heated debates flared up in the British House of Commons, in which Chamberlain's stand in the negotiations with the USSR was sharply criticised.

On May 21, during a League of Nations session, the Soviet Ambassador to Britain, who was in Geneva at the time, met Halifax. He told Ha-

²⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

²⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

²⁶ D.B.F.P., Vol. IX, p. 77.*

²⁷ D.B.F.P., Vol. V, p. 569. *

Halifax that the Soviet government's objective "is to prevent aggression and war and that this is possible only if there is a concentration on the side of peace of such mighty forces as would eliminate any hope of possible victory for the aggressor."²⁸

Halifax again tried to justify the contention that a three-power pact against aggression was unnecessary. "Judging from Halifax's arguments," the Ambassador wrote to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, "it was perfectly clear that the British government is avoiding a three-power pact purely from a desire not to burn its bridges to Hitler and Mussolini."²⁹

On May 22, 1939, a memorandum was prepared in the British Foreign Ministry in which the Soviet objections to the British proposals were outlined and the statement made that "it may be that there is no alternative between agreeing to a three-power pact such as the Soviet government advocate and allowing the present negotiations to fail."

Reviewing the pros and cons of an Anglo-Franco-Soviet pact, the authors of the memorandum indicated, on the negative side, that "...it would be inferred that the British government had finally given up all hope of arriving at a settlement with Germany..." Moreover, there is the further objection that if a pact is concluded with the USSR, His Majesty's government "either by the failure of Poland or Rumania to resist a German advance or by a German attack on the Soviet Union by sea or through the Bal-

²⁸ A.F.P. USSR.

²⁹ A.F.P. USSR.

tic states, might be drawn into a war not for the preservation of the independence of a minor European state, but for the support of the Soviet Union against Germany."

At the same time, the authors of the memorandum could not avoid acknowledging certain positive aspects in a three-power pact— "...such a pact... might, on the other hand, be the only way to avert war." Finally, they considered it advisable to conclude a pact according to which, if Britain were attacked, the Soviet Union would have to come to her aid (a) so that Germany would have to fight on two fronts and (b) to "try to involve the Soviet Union in the war" so that it would not remain untouched while Britain and Germany lay in ruins.³⁰

CHAMBERLAIN'S NEW MANOEUVRES

On May 22, 1939, Germany and Italy signed a military-political alliance agreement, and negotiations were underway to convert it into a triple German-Italian-Japanese alliance. The aggressors sought to join forces for new assaults.

On May 27, 1939, the Soviet government received a new Anglo-French proposal:

"The governments of the United Kingdom, France and the USSR, desiring to give effect in their capacity of members of the League of Nations to the principle of mutual support against aggression which is embodied in the Covenant of the League, have reached the following agreement:

³⁰ D.B.F.P., Vol. V, pp. 640-646. ✕

1. If France and the United Kingdom are engaged in hostilities with a European power in consequence of either

(i) aggression by that power against another European state which they had, in conformity with wishes of that state, undertaken to assist against such aggression, or

(ii) assistance given by them to another European state which had requested such assistance in order to resist a violation of its neutrality, or

(iii) aggression by a European power against either France or the United Kingdom, the USSR, acting in accordance with the principles of Article 16, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, will give France and the United Kingdom all the support and assistance in its power.

2. If the USSR is engaged in hostilities with a European power in consequence of either

(i) aggression by that power against another European state which the USSR had, in conformity with the wishes of that state, undertaken to assist against such aggression; or

(ii) assistance given by the USSR to another European state which had requested such assistance in order to resist a violation of its neutrality,³¹ or

³¹ On May 30, 1939, Deputy Head of the Political and Trade Department of the French Foreign Ministry Rochet commented to Counsellor of the American Embassy in Paris Wilson that there was a "hole" in the agreement which would soon be obvious to the Soviet government. "For instance, if Latvia or Estonia should be attacked by Germany and should not defend themselves or should refrain from appealing to Russia for assistance... then the pledge of mutual assistance would not come into play" (*F.R.U.S.*, 1939, Vol. 1, p. 265).

(iii) aggression by a European power against the USSR, France and Great Britain, acting in accordance with the principles of Article 16, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, will give the USSR all the support and assistance in their power.

3. The three governments will concert together as to the methods by which such mutual support and assistance could, in case of need, be made most effectively.

4. In the event of circumstances arising which threaten to call their undertakings of mutual support and assistance into operation, the three governments will immediately consult together upon the situation. The methods and scope of such consultation will at once be the subject of further discussion between the three governments...³²

In a telegram, dated May 26, to its Ambassador in France, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs noted that from information received it became known that the British and the French wanted to tie in their acceptance of the Soviet three-power mutual aid pact proposal with the League of Nations Covenant and with League of Nations procedure. Our understanding, the message stressed, is that "they want to turn the first point of our proposal into a scrap of paper." "This means that in the event of aggression, mutual aid will not be rendered immediately, as we propose, but only after deliberations in the League of Nations, the results of which deliberations cannot be foretold." The telegram stressed that the Soviet government would insist

³² *A.F.P. USSR*; also published in *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. V, pp. 679-680.

on "immediate implementation of the mutual aid pact."³³

The People's Commissar received the new Anglo-French proposal from Seeds and Payart on May 27. After he had studied it, he told them that his conclusions about the document were negative.

Seeds and Payart were informed that it was not advisable to connect the pact with the League of Nations. In addition, the Anglo-French draft subjected the actual rendering of mutual aid to the complex and lengthy League of Nations procedure. The Soviet government was not against the League of Nations; on the contrary, at the September session of the Assembly, the Soviet representative argued in defence of the League and Article 16 of its Covenant against other delegates, including the British delegate, who finally spoke in favour of regarding this Article as non-obligatory. "However, the procedure," the People's Commissar emphasised, "provided for in the League of Nations Covenant for implementing mutual aid against aggression, and now offered in the Anglo-French draft, must be acknowledged as poorly meeting the requirements for effective mutual aid." Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant stipulated that a recommendation of the League's Council was required before aid could be given. A situation could arise in which the question of aggression by one of the Axis members against the USSR would be placed before the Council, whereupon the Council would have to hear testimony, debate whether or not aggression had actually taken place and discuss

whether or not it was necessary to aid the USSR. In the meantime the aggressor would be pouring artillery fire onto Soviet territory. The Soviet government could not accept the replacement of effective aid to a victim of aggression by mere discussions on the question.

"Paragraph 4," the People's Commissar said further, "reads that if there is a threat of aggression, the three states do not act, but only enter into mutual consultation. This again corroborates the conjecture that the Anglo-French proposals prefer discussions to effective counter-measures against the aggressor. . . The Soviet government's position is quite the opposite. The USSR desires agreement on effective defence against the aggressor. It is not interested in, nor satisfied with, mere discussion."

On the Anglo-French proposals as a whole, the People's Commissar said: "The Anglo-French draft not only fails to contain a plan for organising effective mutual aid among the USSR, Britain and France against aggression in Europe, but does not even indicate any really serious interest in concluding such a pact with the USSR. The proposals suggest that the British and French governments are interested not so much in the pact itself, as in discussions about it. Britain and France may need these discussions for some reason or other. The Soviet government does not know what these reasons are. It is not interested in discussions about a pact, but in organising effective mutual aid among the USSR, Britain and France against aggression in Europe. The Soviet government does not intend to engage in discussions whose aims are unknown to the USSR. The British and French governments may conduct

³³ A.F.P. USSR.

these discussions with more suitable partners than the USSR. Perhaps both governments, having concluded mutual aid pacts with each other and with Poland and Turkey, feel that they are not interested in concluding an effective pact with the Soviet Union. This is the conclusion prompted by the Anglo-French draft, which does not contain proposals for concluding an effective mutual aid pact among the USSR, Britain and France and reduces the question wholly to discussions about a pact."³⁴

On May 31, 1939, Molotov, speaking before a session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, reported on the serious deterioration in the international situation. In this connection, the speaker said, certain changes were noticeable in the policies of the non-belligerent nations of Europe towards opposing aggression. There were indications of growing awareness in the democratic countries of Europe that the policy of non-interference had failed and that it was imperative to make a serious attempt to find ways and means of creating a united front of peaceloving powers against aggression. "Understandably, this trend deserves attention."

"How serious these changes are," the speaker said, "has yet to be seen. It is not yet even possible to say whether these countries seriously want to reject the non-interference policy, the policy of non-resistance to further expansion of aggression. Could it not happen that the desire of these countries to limit aggression in *certain* areas will not hinder the launching of aggression in *other* areas? Such questions are also being raised

in some organs of the bourgeois press abroad. Therefore, we must be vigilant."³⁵

The People's Commissar pointed out that the latest Anglo-French proposals were a step forward in that they recognised the principle of mutual aid on a reciprocal basis among Britain, France and the USSR in the event of direct aggression. But the stipulations contained therein were such that the step forward might have been fictitious. From the point of view of reciprocity the proposals made no progress in regard to guarantees to the Central and East European countries: they provided for Soviet aid to the five countries to whom Britain and France had already given guarantees, but again ignored the need for joint guarantees to the Baltic states bordering the USSR, although these states could possibly be unable to defend their neutrality in the event of attack by the aggressors. The speech stressed that the Soviet Union "cannot assume commitments to the five countries indicated without having received guarantees with respect of the three countries on its northwestern border."

The Soviet government's position was again clearly and precisely outlined at this session of

³⁵ The Chinese Ambassador to Belgium, Tsien Tai, on his return from London to Brussels in early June 1939, told Latvian envoy to Belgium Valters that he had received the following information from an authoritative source in London: "Leaving the Baltic states without guarantees points the way for Germany to the borders of the Soviet Union. If certain borders are left unguaranteed, this clearly means it is allright to attack them... *Chamberlain wants Germany finally to end up in conflict with the Soviet Union, which has been Chamberlain's plan for a long time*" (Central State Archives of the Latvian SSR. Our italics.—Ed.).

³⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

the Supreme Soviet. The Soviet government considered it imperative that an effective mutual aid pact against aggression be concluded among Britain, France and the USSR in order to form a collective security front in Europe; that Britain, France and the USSR provide guarantees against attack by the aggressors to the Central and East European countries, including all the European countries bordering the USSR without exception; and that a definite military agreement be reached among Britain, France and the USSR on the forms and scope of the immediate and effective aid to be given to each other and to the guaranteed states in the event of attack by the aggressors.³⁶

³⁶ *Pravda* June 1, 1939.

3. Soviet Efforts to Maintain Peace in the Baltic

SOVIET DRAFT TREATY (JUNE 2, 1939)

To speed negotiations and correct the shortcomings—the ambiguities, traps and omissions—of the Anglo-French proposals and conclude the effective and equitable three-power (the USSR, Great Britain and France) pact against aggression in Europe, the Soviet government on June 2, 1939 submitted the following draft treaty on mutual assistance to the governments of Britain and France:

“The governments of Great Britain, France and the USSR with the object of making more effective the principles of mutual assistance against aggression adopted by the League of Nations, have come to the following agreement:

“1. France, Britain and the USSR undertake to render to each other immediately all effective assistance should one of these states become involved in hostilities with a European power as a result either of (1) aggression by that power against any of these three states, (2) or aggression by that power against Belgium, Greece, Turkey, Rumania, Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Finland, whom Britain, France and the USSR have agreed to defend against aggression, (3) or assistance

ce rendered by one of these three states to another European state which has requested such assistance in order to resist violation of its neutrality.

"2. The three states will come to an agreement within the shortest possible time as to methods, forms and extent of assistance which is to be rendered by them in conformity with paragraph 1.

"3. In the event of circumstances arising which, in the opinion of one of the contracting parties, create a threat of aggression by a European power, the three states will immediately consult together to examine the situation and in case of necessity to establish in common the moment for putting into immediate effect the mechanism of mutual assistance and the manner of its application independently of any procedure applied by the League of Nations to the examination of questions.

"4. The three states will communicate to each other the texts of all their engagements assumed in the spirit of the obligations provided for under paragraph 1 in respect of the European states. If one of these states contemplates in the future the possibility of assuming new obligations of a similar character it will first consult the other two states and communicate to them the contents (text) of the agreement.

"5. In the event of the commencement of joint operations against aggression in accordance with paragraph 1 the three states undertake only to conclude an armistice or peace by joint agreement.

"6. The present agreement enters into force simultaneously with the agreement which is to be concluded in virtue of paragraph 2.

"7. The present agreement will continue in force for a period of five years from this date. Not less than six months before the expiry of this period the three states will consider whether they wish to renew it with or without modification."¹

Thus, the Soviet government offered for Britain's and France's consideration a draft three-power pact based on the Soviet government's previous proposals and fully meeting the requirements for an effective campaign against aggression. The conclusion of such a pact could have blocked the aggressors.

FRANCE'S STAND ON GUARANTEES AGAINST INDIRECT AGGRESSION

On June 3, the Soviet Ambassador to France met with Daladier. The head of the French government could not but acknowledge the logic of the Soviet proposals. During their talk, they touched on the question of guarantees to other states. The Soviet Ambassador later wrote to Moscow that Daladier told him he "would be inclined (he does not know yet if the British would go for it)" to work out approximately the following somewhat broader formula on this question: "all sides pledge to come immediately to each other's aid in the event of a direct attack in Europe on any of the parties to the agreement, as well as in the event of the parties' being drawn into war as a result of aid rendered to any European state subjected to direct or indirect aggression."

¹ A.F.P. USSR.

sion." In this way, Daladier told the Ambassador, it was possible to avoid listing the states and differentiating those which had already received guarantees or would ask for them, from those who had not yet done so.²

The Daladier formula thus implied that the three states would guarantee not only the countries already guaranteed by Britain and France in March-April 1939, but also Switzerland, Holland and the Baltic states. Having to agree in principle to offering guarantees to the Baltic states, France was counting on simultaneously getting maximum Soviet aid in defending her Western positions by extending the USSR's commitments to Switzerland and Holland, which were also under the threat of German aggression.

Furthermore, Daladier now proposed three-power guarantees to other states in the event of indirect as well as direct aggression, similar to the Anglo-French guarantees to Poland and Rumania. The French government evidently realised that seizure by Germany of such countries as Switzerland would be extremely dangerous to France, regardless of whether it was accomplished by direct or indirect aggression. There was a real possibility that Germany would choose indirect aggression against certain countries, particularly those with pro-fascist, reactionary regimes.

STRANG ARRIVES IN MOSCOW

Pressured by widespread criticism in Britain on the slow pace of the negotiations, Halifax anno-

² A.F.P. USSR.

unced to the Soviet Ambassador on June 8, that the British government would consider it advisable to change the method of negotiation: instead of exchanging notes, it would like to negotiate at a round-table conference in Moscow. Halifax also remarked that "some have advised him to go to Moscow himself," but the complexity of the international situation chained him to London. He said that authority to conduct the negotiations was given to Seeds, the British Ambassador in Moscow. In addition to this, Sir William Strang, Head of the Central European section of Foreign Office, would also be sent to Moscow. "Strang's task will be thoroughly to inform Seeds of the British government's views and feelings about the Anglo-Soviet negotiations and to help him conduct these negotiations."³

Halifax's note about Strang's Moscow trip was due to demands, including those in the House of Commons, for Chamberlain or Halifax to go to Moscow. But a mere Foreign Office functionary, a former counsellor at the British Embassy in Moscow, was sent to the Soviet Union.⁴

³ A.F.P. USSR.

⁴ In a speech on July 23, Lloyd George taunted that "Lord Halifax visited Hitler and Goering. Chamberlain flew into the Führer's arms three times in succession." "Why," Lloyd George asked, "send only a Foreign Office bureaucrat to represent us in an infinitely more powerful country which was offering to come to our aid? There is only one answer: Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Lord Halifax and Sir John Simon do not want any association with Russia" (W.P. and Zelda K. Coates, *A History of Anglo-Soviet Relations*, London, 1945, p. 614).

THE USSR AND GUARANTEES TO BALTIC STATES

To the latest Soviet proposals, on June 8, Halifax said to the British Ambassador that the British government had been in recent contact with representatives of the Baltic states and the conclusion drawn was that they "do not want to be guaranteed *openly*." Therefore, the British government considered it impossible to accept the Soviet proposal that the states receiving guarantees be listed in the treaty. On the other hand, acknowledging that the Soviet demand for guarantees to the Baltic states was "in essence, justified," Halifax said he wanted to offer a compromise; namely that the document make no mention of the states to be guaranteed, but that it state simply that "the pact commitments take effect in the event of a direct or indirect threat to the security of one of the parties to the agreement." At the same time, Halifax still refused to acknowledge the Soviet proposal that the pact and the military agreement be signed simultaneously. He spoke only of the possibility of beginning military negotiations.⁵

As for Britain's position on guarantees to the Baltic states, it should be noted that the Soviet government held its own consultations during those days with representatives of the Baltic states.

On June 5, Latvian envoy to Moscow Kocins asked the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs if there had been mention in the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations "of specifically gua-

ranteeing Latvian neutrality." He was officially told that the negotiations dealt with "specifically guaranteeing Latvia's neutrality" and that when the three powers came to an agreement on this question, Latvia and the other Baltic states would be asked about their attitude to these guarantees. Kocins expressed satisfaction with this explanation and said that Latvia would take a positive attitude towards her neutrality being guaranteed if it receives joint guarantees from corresponding states.⁶

On the same day, the Estonian envoy to Moscow, Rey, was also received at the People's Commissariat and given the same explanation. He was also told that the Soviet government "is not sure to what extent Estonia is actually pursuing a neutral policy, because it is difficult to imagine a small country, such as Estonia, who, if she really wanted to maintain her neutrality, would relate to non-belligerent countries—the USSR, Britain and France—in the same way as to aggressive countries, such as Germany." In answer to this, Rey said that Estonia had the same relations with both groups of countries only formally, but that, actually, in the event of attack by the aggressor, they were counting on aid from the non-belligerent countries.⁷

On June 10, the People's Commissariat instructed its plenipotentiary in London to inform British Foreign Minister Halifax that the negotiations could not be brought to a conclusion without settling the question of guarantees to the three Baltic states. "We feel," the instruction said,

⁶ A.F.P. USSR.

⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

"that without guaranteeing the security of the USSR's northwestern borders by providing for decisive counteraction by the three contracting parties against direct or indirect attack on Estonia, Latvia or Finland, it will be impossible to satisfy public opinion in the Soviet Union, particularly now that the Soviet government's position has received solemn approval in the country's Supreme Soviet. Explain to Halifax that this is not a question of technical wording, but a question of agreeing on the essence of the question, after which it will not be difficult to find a suitable wording."

Referring to Halifax's statement that he had been advised to go to Moscow, the Soviet Ambassador was instructed to tell him that "his coming would be welcomed in Moscow."⁸

In reporting on the fulfilment of his instructions, the Soviet Ambassador wrote on June 12, 1939, that Halifax had to admit "the justness of our desire to have three-power guarantees against direct or indirect aggression in regard to Latvia, Estonia or Finland."

As for coming to Moscow, Halifax said that it was difficult for him to leave London because of the complexity of the international situation.⁹

On June 13, 1939, in an article entitled "The Question of Defending the Three Baltic States Against Aggression" *Pravda* noted that the foreign press had recently come round to admitting the error of its former appraisals and no longer denied that "the question of maintaining the neutrality of the three Baltic states is, from the

point of view of the Soviet Union's security, of vital interest."

The article exposed the speciousness of statements found in the foreign press to the effect that the Baltic states could successfully defend their own sovereignty against aggression, and emphasised that for this reason "there can be no question that the peoples of the Baltic states are vitally interested in guarantees of their sovereignty from the great peace-loving powers."

The article also discussed the fact that certain representatives of the Baltic states, for example, Estonian Foreign Minister Selter and Finnish Foreign Minister Erkko, had made public statements refusing help from the peace-loving powers, and the fact that some parts of the Anglo-French press had been citing these statements.¹⁰ "It seems to us," *Pravda* said, "that this is either a misunderstanding, or an ill-con-

¹⁰ The Nazis, trying to hamper the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations, played up statements of this kind made by certain officials from the Baltic states, and also from Holland and Switzerland. Certain British newspapers reiterated these statements, clearly with the same objective. As mentioned earlier, Halifax also touched on this subject in his talk with the Soviet Ambassador on June 8, but he spoke not of the Baltic states' not wanting guarantees in general, but of their not wanting to be guaranteed *openly*. Characteristic in this respect is the difference between the open statements of Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Selter and the off-the-cuff statement made by Rey, the Estonian envoy in Moscow, to the People's Commissar on June 5. The Latvian government, while voicing its objections to the guaranteeing of Latvian *sovereignty* and the *inviolability* of her borders, also made it known through diplomatic channels, as was mentioned above, that it had no objections to the guaranteeing of Latvia's *neutrality*.

⁸ A.F.P. USSR.

⁹ A.F.P. USSR.

cealed desire by certain politicians to undermine efforts at forming a defence front of non-belligerent powers against aggression." "It is quite possible," the *Pravda* article said further, "that we are dealing here with certain influences from outside, if not with direct inspiration from those who wish to impede the formation of a broad defence front against aggression. At present, it is difficult to say just who the actual inspirers are: the aggressive states, interested in sabotaging the anti-aggression front, or certain reactionaries within the democratic states who want to limit aggression in certain areas, and not hamper its expansion in other areas."¹¹

PLANS FOR ANOTHER MUNICH

By the summer of 1939 more and more information showed that Germany was preparing for fresh military acts.

Chief of the French General Staff General Gamelin remarked in a talk with the Soviet Ambassador in France on June 24, 1939, that according to information coming in from French military agents abroad extremist elements in Ger-

¹¹ British government representatives often gave diplomats from the Baltic states to understand that, though they were negotiating with the USSR, they had no desire whatsoever of concluding a mutual aid pact with it to check Nazi aggression. For instance, the Latvian envoy in Moscow, Kocins, informed Riga on June 16 that British military attache in Moscow Firebrace told him that he personally was "against concluding a pact among Britain, France and the Soviet Union" and that he "does not believe that the pact will be concluded" (Historical-Diplomatic Archive).

many wanted "action at once." "The military measures of the last few days (exercises along the Siegfried Line and concentrations of large forces in Slovakia and Danzig) lend special weightiness and authenticity to this information." Gamelin also said that the intensification of Japan's aggressive actions in the Far East had coincided with Germany's war preparations for a very good reason.¹²

In a talk with the American Ambassador to Paris, Bullitt, on June 28, the head of the French government Daladier noted that there was no doubt that Hitler intended to make war that summer.¹³

British Foreign Secretary Halifax admitted in a talk with US Ambassador to London Kennedy on June 27 that there was serious cause for alarm concerning the forthcoming developments in July.¹⁴

As the danger of war increased, those in Britain and France who favoured a deal with Germany stepped up their activity. The US Chargé d'Affaires in France, Wilson, wrote to the State Department on June 24, 1939, that he had the impression that "*a second Munich, this time at*"

¹² A.F.P. USSR.

¹³ Daladier stressed, in particular, that apart from the Anglo-French-Soviet talks, some deterrent effect could be exerted on Germany by a change in US neutrality legislation, to allow victims of aggression to buy arms, munitions and implements of war in the United States (F.R.U.S., 1939, Vol. 1, p. 277). However, this legislation was left unchanged by the US Congress, which in the summer of 1939 examined the question of amending the neutrality act, the basis of the US variant of non-interference.

¹⁴ F.R.U.S., 1939, Vol. 1, p. 276.

the expense of Poland, may be in the making." Many of the influences which had been at work in France and England the previous September, "are coming to life again and have determined that a trial of strength with Germany must again be avoided, and that if necessary Danzig must go the way the Sudetenland went." He ended by saying that it was still the opinion of influential French circles that "*after all France should abandon Central and Eastern Europe to Germany, trusting that eventually Germany will come into conflict with the Soviet Union, and that France can remain secure behind the Maginot Line.*"¹⁵

At the time, the British government was making another effort to come to terms with Germany.

State Secretary of the German Foreign Ministry Weizsaecker wrote that the British Ambassador in Berlin, Henderson, in a talk with him on June 13, 1939, clearly acting on instructions, "spoke of London's willingness to negotiate with Berlin." The British Ambassador stressed that, "The ending of the armaments race and the revival of economic relations could be the subject of discussions between London and Berlin. The colonial question could also be discussed." Weizsaecker stated that his talk with Henderson implied that "he thinks nothing of the Russian pact."¹⁶

Weizsaecker's record of his talk with Henderson on June 27 once again noted that the British Ambassador engaged in a "search for starting points for new German-British discussions."¹⁷

¹⁵ *F.R.U.S.*, 1939, Vol. I, pp. 193, 194. (Our italics.—Ed.)

¹⁶ *A.D.A.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 599.

¹⁷ *A.D.A.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 666.

The question of Anglo-German relations was also raised by British Ambassador to Turkey, H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, with the German Ambassador von Papen on June 14, 1939. Von Papen said, wrote the British Ambassador, that "it was impossible to believe in British good intentions so long as Britain continued to negotiate with Russia. If Britain seriously wanted to make progress towards a settlement with Germany Britain should drop the Russian negotiations. I replied that he must look at our policy in its full compass; it was a policy of seeking for a settlement, coupled with a policy of insurance against failure."¹⁸

DOUBLE-DEALING CONTINUES

On June 15, 1939, the British Ambassador Seeds, in the presence of the French Ambassador Naggiar and the Director of the Central European Department of the Foreign Office Strang,¹⁹ handed to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs (P.C.F.A.) of the USSR a fresh set of British proposals, which differed little from the earlier ones.

Referring to Article 1 of the Soviet draft of June 2, the British government declared that it fully appreciated the Soviet government's desire not to limit the military support which the three powers might agree to give to each other to cases of aggression against their territory. "His Majesty's government fully appreciate, for example, that the military occupation of one of the Soviet Union's northwest neighbours, whose re-

¹⁸ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, pp. 73-74. ✱

¹⁹ Strang arrived in Moscow on June 14.

sistance might be quickly overborne or who might even acquiesce in the occupation, might be regarded by the Soviet Union as a menace to the security of the Soviet Union. A similar situation in Holland or Switzerland would be a menace to the security of Great Britain and France."

The British government presented a fresh draft of Article 1 which said:

"1. The United Kingdom, France and the USSR undertake to give to each other immediately all the support and assistance in their power should one of these countries become involved in hostilities with a European power as a result either of

"1) aggression by the power against any one of these three countries, or

"2) aggression by that power against another European state which the contracting country concerned had, in conformity with the wishes of that State, undertaken to assist against such aggression, or

"3) action by that power which the three contracting governments, as a result of the consultation between them provided for in paragraph 3, considered to threaten the independence or neutrality of another European state in such a way as to constitute a menace to the security of the contracting country concerned.

"Such support and assistance will be given in conformity with the principles of Article 16, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Covenant of the League of Nations, but without its being necessary to await action by the League."²⁰

²⁰ A.F.P. USSR; also published in D.B.F.P., Vol. VI, p. 34-39, 79.

This draft showed that while the British government continued to acknowledge the Soviet government's legitimate desire to prevent Germany's seizure of the Baltic area, it in fact continued to sabotage any settlement of the question of giving the Baltic states effective guarantees by the three powers.

Thus, if the USSR was to come to the aid of Britain and France *immediately* and automatically upon an attack by Germany on Belgium, Greece, Poland, Rumania or Turkey (according to Article 1, paragraph 2, of the Anglo-French draft pact), no immediate or automatic aid on the part of Britain and France was provided in the event of Germany's attacking the Baltic states (see Article 1, paragraph 3 of the draft). They were bound to do so only in the event if, "as a result of mutual consultations," they recognised Germany's acts as menacing the independence and neutrality of the Baltic states, thereby constituting "a menace to the security" of the USSR.

What if Britain and France failed to recognise Germany's acts as falling within these terms? What if they should drag out the consultations or push them into an impasse, while German troops had already gone over to the offensive? One need merely ask these questions to see that the Anglo-French draft did not in effect impose any commitments on Britain and France in rendering aid to the Baltic states, leaving them the opportunity of evading the extension of aid to the Baltic states in the event of aggression against them.

As for the Soviet proposal for the signing of a military agreement simultaneously with a poli-

tical pact, on June 15 Seeds accepted only that, "immediately upon the conclusion of the pact, the three powers would start consultations for the purpose of determining the methods, forms and extent of the aid to be rendered. . ."

The British government, Seeds's statement made clear, continued to refuse to write into the pact the provision that in the event of war the three powers would undertake to conclude any armistice on peace only by joint agreement.²¹

On June 16, 1939, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR handed the British and French Ambassadors the Soviet government's reply, which said that, having studied the Anglo-French formulations, it had arrived at the following conclusion:

"1) Under Paragraph 1 of Article 1 (the Soviet government's draft), the Soviet government's stand is identical with that of the British and French governments.

"2) Under Paragraph 2 of Article 1 (the Soviet government's draft), the Soviet government's stand is rejected by the British and French governments.

"The latter hold that the Soviet Union should render immediate aid to Poland, Rumania, Belgium, Greece and Turkey, in the event of an attack on them by an aggressor and the involvement in this connection of Britain and France in a war, whereas Britain and France do not undertake any obligations in rendering immediate aid to the Soviet Union in the event of the USSR's being involved in a war with the aggressor over the latter's attack on Latvia, Estonia and Finland, which neighbour on the USSR.

²¹ A.F.P. USSR.

"The Soviet government cannot accept this in any case, because it cannot be reconciled with the unequal position in which this puts it, and which is humiliating for the Soviet Union.

"The Anglo-French proposals explain the refusal to guarantee Estonia, Latvia and Finland by these countries' unwillingness to accept such a guarantee. If this ground is insuperable, and the Soviet government, as has been said above, cannot take part in assisting Poland, Rumania, Belgium, Greece and Turkey, without obtaining equivalent assistance in defending Estonia, Latvia and Finland against an aggressor, the Soviet government feels bound to recognise that the whole question of a tripartite guarantee for all the eight states listed above, like the matter of Paragraph 3 of Article 1, should be postponed as not being pressing, with paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 of Article 1 deleted from the agreement.

"In that event, Article 1 would consist only of Paragraph 1, with the obligations of Britain, France and the USSR on mutual assistance having force only in the event of an aggressor's direct attack on the territory of any of the contracting parties, but would not apply to cases when one of the contracting parties was involved in a war over its assistance to a third state not signatory to the present agreement which had been subjected to an aggressor's attack. In this connection the formulation of Paragraph 1 of Article 1 would naturally have to undergo the relevant amendments.

"3) On the question of the simultaneous entry into force of a general agreement and a military

agreement, there is to be a further discussion in view of the existing differences.

"4) On the question of not concluding an armistice or peace otherwise than by common consent, the Soviet government insists on its stand because it cannot conceive that any of the contracting parties could have the right, at the height of defensive military operations against an aggressor, to conclude a separate agreement with the aggressor behind the backs of and against its allies.

"5) The Soviet government considers the reference to Article 16, Paragraphs 1-2 of the Covenant of the League of Nations to be superfluous."²²

On June 16, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs cabled the Soviet Ambassadors in London and Paris that the latest Anglo-French proposals were basically a repetition of earlier ones. The cable said: "In particular, we are being asked to render immediate assistance to the said five countries, but there is a refusal to give immediate assistance to the three Baltic states ostensibly in view of their refusal to accept such aid. This means that the French and the British put the USSR in a humiliatingly unequal position, something we cannot accept in any case."

"We feel," the cable said, "that the British and the French want to conclude a pact with us which would be advantageous to them and disadvantageous to us, that is, they do not want

a serious treaty in line with the principle of reciprocity and equality of obligations."²³

However, conclusion of a treaty only in the event of direct aggression against any of the three powers did not suit Britain and France, as that would not provide for Soviet aid to the countries to which Britain and France had already given their own guarantees. Accordingly, they decided to table fresh proposals.

On June 21, the British and French Ambassadors handed the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR a new draft Article 1, which said:

"The United Kingdom, France and the USSR undertake to give to each other immediately all the support and assistance in their power should one of these countries become involved in hostilities with a European power as a result either of:

"1) aggression by that power against any one of these three countries, or aggression by it, which being directed against another European state, thereby constituted a menace to the security of one of these three countries, or

"2) aggression by that power against another European state which the contracting country concerned had, with the approval of the state, undertaken to assist against such aggression.

"Such support and assistance will be given in conformity with the principles... of the League of Nations, but without its being necessary to await action by the League."²⁴

²² *A.F.P. USSR.*

²³ *A.F.P. USSR.*

²⁴ *A.F.P. USSR*; also published in *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, pp. 92-93, 140.

In this connection, the French Ambassador made a personal proposal that the countries receiving the guarantees of the three powers should be enumerated in a separate document not subject to publication."²⁵

In addition, the British and French Ambassadors made the following statement to the People's Commissar:

"Taking into consideration the view of the Soviet government and the facts of geographical nature, the Baltic states, Poland and Rumania are, if the two governments are right, those neighbouring European states the inviolability of which is one of the elements of security for the USSR. As regards France and Great Britain, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland are with respect to them those neighbouring European states which have for the security of France and Great Britain the same importance as the five above-mentioned states for Russia."²⁶

Thus, the representatives of Britain and France had now officially raised the question of extending the guarantees of the three powers to Holland and Switzerland.

The British and the French were trying to

²⁵ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 141.

* "Britain's Home Secretary Hoare said, with reference to a talk with the Soviet Ambassador on June 22, that exclusion of any direct enumeration of these countries was due to the fact that otherwise the British would have to include Holland, and French Switzerland, but that out of fear of Germany both these countries would undoubtedly reject the guarantees of the tripartite bloc, and this would be embarrassing" (*A.F.P. USSR*).

²⁶ *A.F.P. USSR*; also published in *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 135.

create the impression that the new Anglo-French proposal took account of all the wishes of the USSR and the interests of its security, but that was far from the truth. When Deputy People's Commissar Potyomkin, who attended a talk between the People's Commissar and the British and French Ambassadors on June 21, asked who was to decide whether aggression against any country constituted a menace to any of the contracting parties, the Ambassadors were forced to admit that "nothing was said in our draft on this point."²⁷ This question alone revealed that the new Anglo-French draft was untenable and unacceptable to the USSR.

A communique on the Anglo-French proposals issued by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on June 21, and published in the Soviet press, said that these "new" British and French proposals were a repetition of old ones. It added: "P.C.F.A. circles note that these 'new' Anglo-French proposals do not constitute any progress as compared with the earlier proposals."²⁸

On June 22, that is, the day after the receipt of the Anglo-French proposals, the Soviet government replied to them. Having stated that it had "made a careful study of the proposals of Britain and France," the Soviet government declared that "these proposals are a repetition of the old proposals of Britain and France, which, it will be recalled, met with serious objections on the part of the Soviet government."²⁹

Characterising the latest Anglo-French pro-

²⁷ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 141. *

²⁸ *Izvestia*, June 22, 1939.

²⁹ *A.F.P. USSR*.

posals, the P.C.F.A. informed the Soviet Ambassadors in London and Paris on June 23, 1939, that the motivation behind them was that they were based on "the fullest equality for the three contracting parties," but that actually that was not so, and that "in these 'new' proposals Britain and France continued to avoid tripartite immediate assistance against any aggressor to the three Baltic states, while providing for tripartite immediate assistance to the said five countries. To these five countries, the 'new' Anglo-French proposals added another two—Switzerland and Holland—whom the USSR must also undertake to help together with Britain and France, although it is known that the USSR does not even have any diplomatic relations with Switzerland and Holland."³⁰

A cable from the People's Commissar to the Ambassadors to Britain and France on June 25 emphasised that the attempts on the part of the British and the French to "create the impression that the latest Anglo-French proposals meet the USSR's demand on the Baltic states are clearly not serious."³¹

On June 29, 1939, *Pravda* carried Zhdanov's article, "The British and the French Governments do not Want an Equal Treaty with the USSR" saying that despite all the Soviet government's efforts towards an early conclusion of a pact on mutual assistance between the USSR, Britain and France, there has been no sign of any appreciable progress in the talks. Referring to the causes for the delay in the talks, Zhdanov stressed

that the facts showed the British and the French governments to be unwilling to have an equal treaty with the USSR, that is, the kind of treaty which alone any self-respecting state could accept, and that "this was precisely the reason why the talks were in a state of stagnation."

He also noted that the British and the French were dragging their feet on the talks: seventy-five days had passed since the submission of the first British proposal (on April 15); of these it had taken the Soviet government sixteen days to prepare replies to the various British drafts and proposals, the other fifty-nine days going into delays and hold-ups on the part of the British and the French. "This fact of intolerable delays and endless procrastination in negotiations with the USSR," said Zhdanov, "gives ground for doubting the sincerity of the true intentions of Britain and France."

He also pointed out that the British and French governments were piling up artificial obstacles in the talks on matters which, given the good will and sincere intentions of Britain and France, could have been settled without delays and obstructions.

"All this is evidence," he stressed, "that the British and the French do not want a treaty with the USSR based on the principle of equality and reciprocity—even if they do swear daily that they, too, stand for 'equality'—but one in which the USSR would act as the hired man, shouldering the full burden of the obligations. No self-respecting country will accept such a treaty, unless it wants to be a cat's-paw for men who want others to pull their chestnuts out of the fire. There is even less reason to accept such

³⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

³¹ A.F.P. USSR.

a treaty for the USSR whose strength, might and dignity are well known to the world.

"I feel that the British and the French do not want a real treaty acceptable to the USSR but merely *talk* about a treaty, so as to speculate on the USSR's imaginary intransigence in the eyes of public opinion at home, and make it easier for themselves to make a deal with aggressors."

4. The USSR Stands for a Political and Military Treaty with Britain and France Against Aggression

ANGLO-FRENCH PROPOSALS

On June 28, 1939, Labour Party and trade union representatives Morrison, Dalton and Citrine called on Chamberlain, and later told Maisky, the Soviet Ambassador in London, that they had informed the Prime Minister of their concern over the ominous development in the international situation and stressed the urgent need of an Anglo-Franco-Soviet pact. Chamberlain's reply was that the British Ambassador in Moscow, Seeds, had been given fresh instructions, according to which the British, as Ambassador Maisky advised Moscow, "ostensibly accepted, 'in essence', all of the Soviet proposals." "Chamberlain and Halifax," Maisky wrote, "have repeatedly claimed that the British 'formula' fully covered our proposals when, in actual fact, it did not. The same thing may happen again." Chamberlain's statement, Maisky wrote, was obviously intended to mollify the opposition.¹

On July 1, 1939, the diplomatic representati-

¹ A.F.P. USSR.

ves of Great Britain and France delivered to the Soviet government a revised Anglo-French draft of Article 1 of the proposed pact and a supplementary draft agreement, that was not to be made public.

The draft of Article 1 read as follows:

"The United Kingdom, France and the USSR undertake to give to each other immediately all effective assistance should one of these countries become involved in hostilities with a European power as a result of aggression by that power against any one of these three countries or aggression by that power against another European state whose independence or neutrality the contracting country concerned felt obliged to defend against such aggression.

"Such assistance will be given in conformity with the principles of the League of Nations but without it being necessary to follow the procedure of, or to await action by, the League."

The supplementary draft agreement read:

"It is understood between the three contracting governments that Article 1 of the treaty between them signed to-day will apply to the following European states:

"Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Rumania, Turkey, Greece, Belgium, Luxemburg, Netherlands and Switzerland.

"The foregoing list of countries is subject to revision by agreement between the three contracting governments.

"The present understanding between the three governments will not be made public."²

Thus, the governments of Britain and France

² A.F.P. USSR.

finally agreed to list the states (including the Baltic states) to whom the three powers extended guarantees, but they proposed to do so not in the body of the treaty itself, but in a supplementary and secret agreement.

On the face of it, this looked like a step forward in the negotiations, but new stipulations were forthcoming that revealed this progress to be more apparent than real. That night, the French Ambassador in Moscow Naggiar handed Deputy People's Commissar Potyomkin the Anglo-French draft of Article 3, which dealt with consultations. It became immediately clear that the question of effective guarantees to the Baltic states remained outstanding.

The Anglo-French draft of Article 3 read:

"Without prejudice to the immediate rendering of assistance upon commencement of hostilities in accordance with Article 1, in the event of circumstances arising which threaten to call into operation the undertakings of mutual assistance contained in Article 1, the three contracting governments will, at the request of any one of them, immediately consult together to examine the situation and to decide by common agreement the moment at which the mechanism of mutual assistance shall be put into immediate operation and the manner of its application, independently of any procedure of the League of Nations."³

Naggiar's interpretation of this draft indicated that what was objected to previously in Article 1 was now simply transferred to Article 3. He explained that the consultations provided for in Article 3 did not relate to circumstances cover-

³ A.F.P. USSR.

ed in Article 1 (that is, direct aggression), but only to "circumstances which threaten peace and may lead to hostilities in the future" (that is, indirect aggression). As an illustration, the French Ambassador cited the possibility that in Switzerland, for example, power might be seized "by fascist parties, which would enter into close contact with Nazi Germany and, under her direction, begin preparations for carrying out Germany's offensive plans against France. There would be no direct aggression yet, but France could call on the USSR and Great Britain to join her in consultation with the aim of averting a German attack."⁴

It will be recalled that in March-April 1939, Britain and France gave Poland and Rumania guarantees against both direct and indirect aggression, and that on June 3 Daladier again suggested that the guarantees given by the three powers to other states should also apply in cases of both direct and indirect aggression. Yet the new Anglo-French proposals still provided for guarantees to the Baltic states only in the event of direct aggression (Article 1); in the event of so-called indirect aggression by Germany in the Baltic region, Britain and France agreed only to hold consultations (Article 3). This meant that if Germany opted for indirect aggression in the Baltic, and if the USSR undertook to block her and found itself in a state of war with Germany, it could expect consultations with, but not military assistance from, Britain and France.

There was good reason to anticipate that Ger-

many would turn to indirect aggression in the Baltic states. She had been consistently using her great economic influence there for political ends, and many influential Germans living in the Baltic countries were direct German agents. German government circles maintained close ties with a number of Baltic military and political leaders. Germany's sharply increased penetration into the Baltic countries at this particular time was not without its results.

On July 10, the British envoy to Estonia Gallienne told Estonia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Selter that evidence pointed to the fact that "Estonia was tending to become pro-German," that "business circles, moneyed classes and the army were apparently veering in that direction, and the Estonian government might be encouraging this." He pointed out that the Estonians "were doing much to justify a Soviet contention that the Baltic states could not be trusted to ask for help before it was too late."⁵

In the summer of 1939, General Halder, German Army Chief of Staff, and Admiral Canaris, head of German military intelligence, made secret visits to Estonia and Finland.⁶

⁵ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 326.

⁶ Canaris's deputy, General Pikkenbrock, subsequently admitted that German military intelligence had maintained constant communication, on an anti-Soviet basis, with Rumanian, Finnish and Estonian intelligence agencies. "We received information," he wrote, "from the intelligence services of countries bordering Russia—Finland and Estonia, for example—who smuggled their agents into Russia with instructions from German intelligence" (Testimony of G. Pikkenbrock, "Some Characteristic Features of German Intelligence Against Various Countries in Time of Peace and War," *Nedelya*, Dec., 15, 1968).

⁴ *A.F.P. USSR*.

Under the circumstances, the Soviet government naturally wanted to have the three-power guarantees in the Anglo-Franco-Soviet treaty apply to any form of German aggression in the Baltic region.

THE USSR FOR EFFECTIVE MUTUAL AID

On July 3, 1939, the Soviet government gave the British and French representatives its counter-proposals, which provided for immediate assistance to the Baltic countries in the event of either direct or indirect aggression.

The Soviet draft of Article 1 read:

"The United Kingdom, France and the USSR undertake to give each other immediately all effective assistance should one of these countries become involved in hostilities with a European power as a result either of aggression by that power against any one of these three countries, or of aggression, direct or indirect, by that power against another European state whose independence or neutrality one of the three contracting countries felt obliged to defend against such aggression.

"The assistance provided for in the present article will be given in conformity with the principles of the League of Nations, but without it being necessary to follow the procedure of, or await action by, the League."⁷

The Soviet government reworded the supplementary agreement to read as follows:

"The three contracting governments have agreed that Article 1 of the Agreement signed by them today will apply—either in the event of direct aggression or in the event of indirect aggression, understood to mean an internal coup or a change in policy in favour of the aggressor—to the following states:

"Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Rumania, Turkey, Greece, Belgium.

"The foregoing list of countries is subject to revision by agreement between the three contracting governments."⁸

Article 3 as proposed by the Soviet government read:

"Without prejudice to the immediate rendering of assistance in accordance with Article 1, and with a view to securing its more effective organisation, the three contracting governments will exchange information periodically about the international situation and will lay down the lines of mutual diplomatic support in the interests of peace, and in the event of circumstances arising which threaten to call into operation the undertakings of mutual assistance contained in Article 1, they will, at the request of any one of them, immediately consult together to examine the situation and to decide by common agreement the moment at which the mechanism of mutual assistance shall be put into immediate operation and the manner of its application, independently of any procedure of the League of Nations."⁹

⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

⁸ A.F.P. USSR.

⁹ A.F.P. USSR.

In a dispatch dated July 3, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs advised its plenipotentiaries in London and Paris that the British and French Ambassadors in Moscow had been given a reply to their latest proposals. The Soviet side agreed to accept the Anglo-French proposal to list the guaranteed countries in a supplementary protocol so that the subject of guarantees could be treated in a general way in the body of the treaty, without mentioning any specific countries. "We have rejected the new Anglo-French proposal," the dispatch went on, "to offer guarantees to three additional countries—Switzerland, Netherlands and Luxemburg—since only eight and not eleven countries were discussed during negotiations and endorsed by the Supreme Soviet. We could agree to include two more countries (Switzerland and Netherlands), but not three, and these two only on condition that Poland and Turkey conclude mutual assistance treaties with the USSR similar to those they have with Britain and France."

The dispatch pointed out that unless Poland and Turkey undertook to assist the Soviet Union, the Soviet government could not undertake any additional commitments. The other revisions, the same dispatch explained, "amounted to the following: the Anglo-Franco-Soviet treaty must cover not only direct but also indirect aggression." Without prejudice to immediate rendering of assistance, the dispatch went on, the treaty was to provide for consultations among Britain, France and the USSR in the event of a threat, as well as for the purpose of better preparation for rendering mutual assistance, exchange of information on the international situation and seeking

ways of mutual diplomatic support in the interests of peace.¹⁰

The Soviet Ambassador to France advised Moscow that on July 7 he talked with French Minister of Colonies Mandel, who "acknowledged that we have every right to mistrust the negotiators and insist that every point be made clear and explicit. 'It would be better to lose a few weeks', Mandel said, 'than allow any vagueness or reservations'." The experience over Czechoslovakia, he said, also fully justified Soviet demands that the treaty provisions cover "not only direct aggression but also internal putsches."¹¹

Meanwhile, on July 6 Halifax sent a telegram to Seeds in Moscow saying that he did not consider it possible to accept the Soviet definition of aggression, although he did not deny the validity of Soviet demands that "Russia should be covered not only in the case of direct aggression, but of indirect aggression such as that practised against Czechoslovakia on March 15 last."¹²

BRITAIN AND FRANCE PROCRASTINATE

On July 8 the British and French Embassies in Moscow submitted to the Soviet government their draft of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet treaty.

Two alternative forms of the Preamble were submitted.

¹⁰ *A.F.P. USSR.*

¹¹ *A.F.P. USSR.*

¹² *D.B.F.P.* Vol. VI, p. 277. ✕

Alternative "A"

"The Governments of the United Kingdom, France and the USSR, with the object of making more effective the principles of mutual assistance against aggression adopted by the League of Nations, have reached the following agreement.

Alternative "B"

"The Governments of the United Kingdom, France and the USSR, considering that any action against the independence or neutrality of a European state affects the peace and security of Europe as a whole, being firmly attached to the respect and maintenance of such independence and neutrality and desirous of making more effective the principles of mutual assistance against aggression adopted by the League of Nations, have reached the following agreement."

Article 1 of this draft duplicated Article 1 of the draft submitted by the British and French governments on July 1.

Article 2

"The three contracting governments will concert together as soon as possible as to the methods, forms and extent of the assistance to be rendered by them in conformity with Article 1, with the object of making such assistance as effective as possible in case of need.

Article 3

"The three contracting governments will exchange information periodically about the international situation and will lay down the lines of mutual diplomatic support in the interests of peace. Without prejudice to the immediate ren-

dering of assistance in accordance with Article 1, and with a view to securing its more effective preparation, in the event of circumstances arising which threaten to call into operation the undertakings of mutual assistance contained in Article 1, the three contracting governments will, on the request of one of them, immediately consult together to examine the situation and (in case of necessity) to decide by common agreement the moment at which the mechanism of mutual assistance shall be put into immediate operation and the manner of its application (independently of any procedure of the League of Nations).

Article 4

"The three contracting governments will communicate to one another the terms of any undertakings of assistance which they have already given to other European states. Any of the three governments which may in future be considering the giving of any fresh undertaking of the same character will consult the other two governments before doing so, and will communicate to them the terms of any undertaking so given.

Article 5

"In the event of joint operations against aggression being begun in accordance with Article 1, the three contracting governments undertake only to conclude an armistice or peace by common agreement.

Article 6

"With a view to ensuring the full efficacy of the present agreement, the agreement foreshado-

wed in Article 2 will be concluded within the shortest possible time, and negotiations for this purpose will open immediately after the signature of the present agreement.

Article 7

"The present agreement will continue for a period of five years from today's date. Not less than six months before the expiry of the said period, the three contracting governments will consult together as to the desirability of renewing it, with or without modification."

The first paragraph of the supplementary protocol read as follows:

"It is understood between the three contracting governments that Article 1 of the agreement between them signed today will apply to the following European states, and that the word 'aggression' is to be understood as covering action accepted by the state in question under threat of force by another power and involving the abandonment by it of its independence or neutrality."¹³

This July 8 proposal contained some new points. The British and French governments, for example, finally agreed to conclude an armistice or peace only by common agreement (Article 5). However, the proposal still made no provision for simultaneously concluding a military as well as a political agreement.

The supplementary protocol now provided for mutual assistance in case of either direct or indirect aggression, but the definition of indirect aggression contained therein was highly inadequate:

¹³ *A.F.P. USSR.*

quate: it provided for assistance to be given to the guaranteed states only in the case of an open threat of force. This left uncovered anything similar to the circumstances surrounding the "agreement" signed on March 15, 1939 by Hitler and the then head of the Czechoslovak government Hacha, which eliminated Czechoslovakia as an independent state. Although the agreement was signed by Hacha under direct threat of a German attack on Czechoslovakia, it was publicly proclaimed as voluntary not only by Hitler, but by Hacha as well. If Germany in like manner, that is, without resorting to force, but merely by agreement with the Baltic governments, were to gain access to the territories of these countries for use as a springboard for attacking the USSR, the Soviet Union, as before, would not be able to count on assistance from Britain and France in blocking the aggressor.

On July 9, a new Soviet draft of the supplementary protocol was handed to the British and French Ambassadors. It said:

"The three contracting governments have agreed that

1) Article 1 of the Agreement signed by them today will apply to the following European states: Turkey, Greece, Rumania, Poland, Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Switzerland, Holland;

"2) with respect to the last two of the above-named countries (Switzerland, Holland), the agreement shall take effect only if and when Poland and Turkey conclude a mutual assistance pact with the USSR;

"3) the term 'indirect aggression' applies to any act which any of the above listed states agrees to under threat of force by another power,

or without such threat, which act involves the use of the given state's territory and forces for aggression against it or against one of the contracting parties, consequently involving the abandonment by that state of its independence or neutrality.

"The foregoing list is subject to revision by agreement between the contracting governments.

"The present supplementary agreement will not be made public."¹⁴

The British government, however, continued to show no real desire to reach an agreement with the USSR. The Munichmen continued to bank on a Soviet-German conflict and were not eager to conclude any agreement with the USSR that would place obligations on Britain if Germany attacked the USSR. On July 12 Halifax sent Seeds a telegram telling him quite frankly that the British government could not accept the Soviet definition of indirect aggression nor its proposal that political and military agreements take effect simultaneously. He advised Seeds that the Soviet side could be given to understand that if it insisted on its demands "His Majesty's government may have to reconsider their whole position."¹⁵

The British government hinted to Seeds that the negotiations were likely to be broken off.

On July 14, the Soviet Ambassador in London met with Lloyd George, who criticised his government's position. In his report on this meeting to Moscow, the Ambassador wrote that Lloyd George "expressed grave concern over the course

and future prospects of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations. He said that the Chamberlain clique, still unable to resign themselves to the idea of a pact with the USSR against Germany, was now attempting a manoeuvre roughly along these lines. On the one hand, the British government was pressuring Poland through political, military and economic channels, recommending 'moderation' over Danzig. On the other hand, by mobilising the navy, putting on a show of air power in France¹⁶ (and probably in Poland), emphasising the strength of the Anglo-French alliance, publicising the 'firm' speeches made by British ministers, etc., the British government hoped to 'frighten' Germany and thus to restrain her from expanding the conflict over Danzig into an all-out war.

"If this manoeuvre is successful and German aggression either stops altogether for a time, or is spearheaded in a direction not involving the European states to which Britain has obligations, the urgency of concluding a pact with the USSR will diminish and Chamberlain will have an opportunity to try once more to reach an agreement with the aggressor, or at least to delay even longer the signing of a pact with the Soviet government.

"The fact that on August 4 Parliament will rise for the holidays until October has an important role to play, in the Prime Minister's reckoning. With Parliament away, the British government has greater freedom of action. During the recess, when pressure from the opposition will naturally slacken, it will be easier for Chamber-

¹⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁵ D.B.F.P., Vol. VI, p. 335-336.

¹⁶ A reference to flights by RAF planes to France.

lain either to break off the Anglo-Soviet negotiations altogether, or at least to freeze them for an extended period, placing the blame for this (in the eyes of British public opinion) on the USSR. 'Whether or not the Prime Minister could carry out this plan was another question,' said Lloyd George, "for this would depend on a great many factors over which the Prime Minister had no control, but 'such is the plan'." ¹⁷

MUNICHMEN AGAINST MILITARY AGREEMENT

On July 17, Seeds, Naggiar and Strang handed the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs new drafts of Article 1 and the supplementary protocol. The definition of aggression which appeared in the supplementary protocol of the July 8 proposal and which was unacceptable to the Soviet Union was not revised to reflect any of the Soviet suggestions, but was simply switched, unaltered, to Article 1 of the new proposal which read as follows:

"The United Kingdom, France and the USSR undertake to give to each other immediately all effective assistance if one of these three countries becomes involved in hostilities with a European power as a result either

"(1) of aggression aimed by that power against one of the three countries, or

"(2) of aggression aimed by that power against any European state whose independence or neutrality the contracting country concerned feels obliged to defend against such aggression.

¹⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

"It is agreed between the three contracting governments that the word 'aggression' in paragraph 2 above is to be understood as covering action accepted by the state in question under threat of force by another power and involving the abandonment by it of its independence or neutrality.

"The assistance provided for in the present article will be given in conformity with the principles of the League of Nations but without its being necessary to follow the procedure of, or to await action by, the League." ¹⁸

The Protocol, as revised, read:

"The three contracting governments have agreed as follows:

"1. Paragraph 2 of Article 1 of the agreement signed by them to-day will apply to the following European states: Turkey, Greece, Rumania, Poland, Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, Finland.

"2. The foregoing list of states is subject to revision by agreement between the three contracting governments.

"3. In the event of aggression or threat of aggression by a European power against a European state not named in the foregoing list, the three contracting governments will, without prejudice to the immediate action which any of them may feel obliged to take, immediately consult together at the request of any one of them with a view to such action as may be mutually agreed upon.

"4. The present supplementary agreement will not be made public." ¹⁹

¹⁸ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁹ A.F.P. USSR.

In briefing the Soviet Ambassadors in London and Paris on the July 17 negotiations, Molotov wrote that the British and French Ambassadors had advised him that they did not insist on including Switzerland, Netherlands and Luxembourg in the supplementary protocol and therefore limited the list to eight countries.

"However," the People's Commissar wrote, "the revisions in the protocol will require clarification. There is still disagreement on how the definition of 'indirect aggression' should be worded; our partners resort to all kinds of skulduggery on this question. Also, we have insisted all along that the military part is an inseparable component of a military-political agreement, which is what the draft treaty under discussion is, and categorically reject the Anglo-French proposal that we should first agree on the 'political' part of the treaty and only then turn to the question of a military agreement. This unscrupulous Anglo-French proposal splits up what should be a single treaty into two separate treaties and contradicts our fundamental proposal to conclude the whole treaty all at once, including its military part, which is actually the most important and most political part of the treaty. You understand that if an absolutely concrete military agreement is not included as an integral part of the overall agreement, the treaty will amount to nothing but an empty declaration, and this is something we cannot accept.

"Only swindlers and cheats, such as negotiators on the Anglo-French side have shown themselves to be all this time, could make it appear that our demands for simultaneous political and military agreements are something new in the ne-

gotiations, while at the same time leaking rumors to the press to the effect that we demand a military pact first, that is, before signing a political agreement. It is hard to understand just what they expect when they resort to such clumsy tricks in the negotiations."²⁰

In his answer to this communication, Soviet Ambassador in Paris Surits wrote on July 19, 1939: "While the negotiators are double-dealing with you, they are at the same time deceiving the public in their own countries, where the vast majority (at least here, in France) are waiting impatiently for an early conclusion of an effective agreement with us. The deception is primarily one of distorting our position—which they describe as one of constantly coming up with new demands—and of deliberately misinforming the public about the substance of our demands and the real points over which there is disagreement.

"Thus, for example, the substance of our proposal regarding a military agreement, which we made in our very first memorandum in April and which, according to my observations, is concurred in here by all serious proponents of a treaty ('worthless without a military agreement'), was deliberately distorted and presented to the public and the press as a demand for prior conclusion of a military pact, 'entailing the disclosure of military secrets' and without sufficient guarantee or certainty that a political agreement will, in fact, be reached (this, incidentally, is how Kerillis was informed). As much effort has been

²⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

made to distort our formulation of indirect aggression."

The Ambassador went on to say that the British and French negotiators had been using these delaying tactics because after the "Czechoslovakian experience" there is in France probably not a single proponent of setting up barriers against aggression who would consider it adequate to block only "direct" or open aggression. "Their three months' temporising has made it perfectly clear that our partners do not want to reach a real agreement with us, but, being wary of their own public opinion, will conceal this fact and continue to hide behind the 'secrecy of negotiations'." ²¹

CHAMBERLAIN SEEKS AGREEMENT WITH GERMANY

The British government, while displaying no eagerness to reach agreement with the USSR, intensified its efforts for a deal with the Nazis.

On July 18, and again on July 21, 1939, meetings took place between Chamberlain's confidential agent Wilson (chief economic adviser to the British government) and Nazi emissary Wohltat (a special assignments officer of Göring's department). Wilson proposed an Anglo-German non-aggression pact and a declaration of Germany's non-interference in the affairs of the British Empire and Britain's non-interference in the affairs of "Greater Germany."

A record of this meeting, discovered in the

²¹ A.F.P. USSR.

German archives, indicated that "the end goal towards which Mr. Wilson is aiming is a broad Anglo-German understanding on all important questions..." In Wilson's view, questions of such magnitude would be raised and resolved that problems like Danzig and Poland "would recede into the background and lose their significance..." Sir Horatio Wilson made it quite explicit to Mr. Wohltat that a non-aggression pact would enable Britain to disengage herself from her obligations to Poland." ²²

On July 20, 1939, Wilson arranged a meeting between Wohltat and British Minister of Overseas Trade Hudson. Describing this meeting, German Ambassador in London Dirksen wrote: "Hudson outlined some far-reaching plans for Anglo-German cooperation in opening up new, and exploiting existing, world markets. He expressed the opinion, incidentally, that there were still three large areas in which Germany and Britain could find abundant opportunity for profitably applying their efforts; namely, the British Empire, China and Russia." ²³

Thus, while the British Ambassador in Moscow was negotiating with the Soviet government, the British government was trying to consummate a deal with the aggressor not only to settle Anglo-German differences, but also to begin "applying their efforts" in Russia and China.

Hudson's talk with Wohltat was given rather wide publicity in Great Britain, reports on it

²² *Documents and Materials on the Eve of the Second World War*. Vol. II, Moscow, 1948, pp. 72, 73, 75.

²³ *Documents and Materials on the Eve of the Second World War*. Vol. II, pp. 70-71.

even appearing in the British press. The Soviet Ambassador in London informed Moscow on July 24 that "The Prime Minister is now making a desperate effort to back out of the commitments made in the spring regarding guarantees to Poland and at the same time to revive his former policy of appeasement. To this end, the British government continues to put strong pressure on the Polish government, advising 'moderation' over Danzig." With respect to Germany, they were pursuing a whip-and-carrot policy: on the one hand, there was the mobilisation of the British Navy and RAF flights to France and, on the other, the Hudson-Wohltat talk in London "on the possibility of granting Germany huge international loans of up to £1,000 million, if Hitler really abandoned his 'aggressive intentions' (read, leave the West alone and face Eastwards.)"

There was no doubt, the Ambassador concluded, that in the course of their talk Hudson "was expressing the feelings of the Prime Minister."²⁴

On July 29, discussions took place between British Labour Party official Roden Buxton and Counsellor of the German Embassy in London T. Kordt. During their meeting, Buxton introduced the following proposal for an Anglo-German "agreement on establishing spheres of influence":

"1. Germany agrees not to interfere in the affairs of the British Empire.

"2. Great Britain agrees to fully respect the German spheres of interest in Eastern and South-eastern Europe. As a consequence, Great Britain would revoke the guarantees extended by

²⁴ A.F.P. USSR:

her to certain states in the German sphere of influence. Further, Great Britain agrees to take action to induce France to dissolve her alliance with the Soviet Union and sever all her ties in Southeastern Europe.

"3. Great Britain agrees to discontinue the present negotiations with the Soviet Union..."²⁵

On August 3, Wilson met with German Ambassador in London Dirksen. The latter wrote that the talk "disclosed that the essence of the Wohltat-Wilson talk was still in full force." Wilson confirmed the fact that he had offered Wohltat a programme of negotiations aimed at concluding a non-aggression pact, reaching agreement on non-interference and armaments and also on questions of raw materials, foreign trade, and Germany's economic interests in Southeastern Europe.

Referring to the first item on non-aggression pact, Dirksen wrote: "Sir Horatio Wilson brought up this part of the British government's secret plan when, in the course of the talk, I asked him how an agreement with Germany could be consistent with the policy of encirclement being pursued by the British government. Sir Horatio Wilson's reply to this was that an Anglo-German agreement which included a pledge not to attack third powers would completely release the British government from their current guarantee obligations with respect to Poland, Turkey, etc."²⁶

²⁵ *Documents and Materials on the Eve of the Second World War*. Vol. II, pp. 125-126.

²⁶ *Documents and Materials on the Eve of the Second World War*. Vol. II, pp. 132-133.

Thus, the British government was prepared, in the event of an Anglo-German agreement being reached, to break off negotiations with the Soviet Union, renege on its guarantees to the countries of Eastern Europe, and give its blessings to a continued Nazi "Drang nach Osten."

MOSCOW TALKS THREATENED

In the light of the British government's mood and the Anglo-German talks, it becomes clear why the British were already considering breaking off the Anglo-French Soviet negotiations, and a search for the most suitable pretext was under way. The British were obviously aware that if the negotiations were broken off because of Britain's refusal to sign a military pact with the USSR, there would be no question as to where the blame lay. Therefore, they felt that if and when they finally decided to stop the negotiations, it would be better to do so by pushing them into a dead-end over the questions of guarantees to other countries and the definition of indirect aggression. In a telegram to Halifax, dated July 12, Seeds suggested that it would be better to do so over indirect aggression than a military agreement.²⁷

The question was discussed in detail by Strang in a letter to the Foreign Office dated July 20. He wrote: "At the point which the negotiations have now reached we seem to have several al-

ternatives before us. We might accept the Soviet view about the inseparability of the political and military agreements and *break* on the definition of indirect aggression. Or we might accept the Soviet definition of indirect aggression and *break* on Article 6.²⁸ Or we might accept neither and *break* on both."

Regarding the military agreement, Strang noted that "the negotiation of the military part of the agreement will be a very difficult matter" and that "we may find ourselves for months in negotiation with Moscow without any concrete agreement being reached.... Whether the continuance of this indeterminate situation would be better for us than a *final breakdown of the negotiations now* is a matter of high policy, but I think myself that it would. A break would create bad feeling. It would encourage the Germans to act. It might drive the Soviet Union into isolation or into composition with Germany. On the other hand, the fact that military conversations were in progress, although producing no immediate concrete results, would still probably worry Hitler. Russia would also be less likely to remain neutral."²⁹

The British government evidently accepted Strang's view that it would be better to proceed with this "indeterminate situation," that is, endless negotiation without reaching any kind of agreement, than a "*breakdown of the negotiations now.*"

²⁸ Article 6 of the Soviet draft treaty provided for simultaneous entry into force of the political and the military agreements.

²⁹ D.B.F.P., Vol. VI, pp. 423-426 (Our italics.—Ed.)

On July 23, Seeds informed the People's Commissar that the British government, after consultation with the French government, "now accepted Article 6 as it appeared in the Soviet draft and agreed to simultaneous entry into force of the two Agreements."³⁰

The announcement finally opened the way for military negotiations.³¹ But the question still remained open whether or not the British government would take these negotiations seriously.

Also still outstanding was the question of the conditions under which the three-power guarantees to other states would enter into force (the question regarding indirect aggression). The British government, although acknowledging the validity of the Soviet government's apprehension regarding German indirect aggression in the Baltic countries, was nonetheless not inclined to help avert it and had no intention of solving the problem. Halifax wrote to Seeds on July 28, that since it had been decided to begin military discussions, there was no danger of a break in the Moscow negotiations in the following critical weeks, and that, therefore, "we feel that we can afford to take a somewhat stiffer line" with res-

³⁰ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 457.

³¹ As reported by Ambassador Seeds to London, the People's Commissar had told him and Naggiar on July 23 that no further delays were desirable in opening military negotiations. The Commissar emphasised the Soviet viewpoint that is was important to define the form and scope of military commitments (*D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 457).

pect to the definition of indirect aggression.³²

During the discussions that took place on July 27, Seeds proposed issuing a communique to the effect that agreement on the political articles of the treaty had reached a stage at which it was possible to begin examining practical measures and that, consequently, the governments of Britain and France had decided to send representatives of their General Staffs to conduct "technical negotiations" with the General Staff of the Soviet Union.³³

The Soviet side felt that until such time as it became clear just how the military discussions would go, an announcement of this nature would be premature. Furthermore, release of such a communique would create the false impression that the political negotiations had been completed.³⁴

On August 2, the Soviet government received a new Anglo-French definition of indirect aggression which differed little from their previous definition. It read:

"It is agreed between the three contracting governments that the words 'indirect aggression' in paragraph 2 above are to be understood as

³² *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 525. The French government judging by its notes of July 18 and 19, considered the Soviet definition of indirect aggression as acceptable (*D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, pp. 384, 397).

³³ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 510.

³⁴ Informing London of these talks, Seeds wrote that the People's Commissar felt that before making a public statement about the negotiations, it would be desirable to complete the military discussion, since it was important to determine how many divisions each side could supply and where they would be deployed (*D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, pp. 523-524).

not excluding (or as including) action accepted by the state in question under threat of force by another power and involving the abandonment by it of its independence or neutrality.

"In the event of circumstances arising which are not covered in the above definition, but which, in the judgement of one of the contracting governments, threaten the independence or neutrality of a state in question, the contracting governments will, on the request of any one of them, immediately consult together for the purpose of taking any action on which a decision is taken by common consent."³⁵

The wording was again such that in a number of cases of indirect aggression, consultations only were provided for, rather than immediate assistance, to the states guaranteed by the three contracting powers. Britain and France had only to prolong such consultations to leave the Soviet Union without support in the event of a German offensive.

This meant that Germany had, with the connivance and even encouragement of the Munichmen, the road thrown open towards the Soviet borders.

On August 2, 1939, TASS published a report "On One of the Reasons for the Delay in the Negotiations with Britain" which read:

"In a speech before the House of Commons on July 31 of this year, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs Mr. Butler said, according to the press, that the British government was doing everything possible to speed the resolution

of disagreements between the USSR and Britain, the chief disagreement having to do with the question of whether or not we should encroach upon the independence of the Baltic states. I contend, said Mr. Butler, that we should not, and in this disagreement lie the main reasons for the delay in the negotiations.

"TASS has been authorised to announce that if Mr. Butler did indeed say the above, he has allowed himself a distortion of the Soviet government's position. In actual fact, the disagreements do not consist in whether or not to encroach upon the independence of the Baltic countries, for both sides want this independence guaranteed; they have rather to do with not leaving for the aggressor encroaching upon the independence of the Baltic states any kind of loophole in the definition of 'indirect aggression.'

"One of the reasons for the delay in the negotiations is that the British formula leaves such a loophole for the aggressor."³⁶

On August 5, Seeds informed Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs Potyomkin that Strang had been recalled to London and further negotiations on the political agreement would continue without his participation. Naggiar, who was also present at the time, stated that what was still left to be resolved in the political discussions was the question of indirect aggression, and remarked that "a precise definition of this concept is exceedingly difficult."³⁷ However, neither he nor Seeds were able to offer any new concrete proposals.

³⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

³⁶ *Izvestia*, Aug. 2, 1939.

³⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

It was decided that, henceforth, the political negotiations would be conducted parallel with the military talks. However, the political talks were never resumed through the fault of the Anglo-French side.

5. Anglo-Franco-Soviet Military Talks

BRITAIN CONTINUES TO PROCRASTINATE

On July 25, 1939, the British government finally accepted the Soviet proposal to begin negotiations on an Anglo-Franco-Soviet military agreement. British Foreign Minister Halifax informed the Soviet Ambassador in London that a British military mission would be able to leave for Moscow in about 7 to 10 days, but that its make-up had not yet been determined.¹ French Foreign Minister Bonnet, meanwhile, informed the Soviet Embassy in France on July 26 that the French military delegation would leave for Moscow "in the next few days."² However, both the British and French military representatives arrived in Moscow on August 11 only.

On August 3, the Soviet People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs informed the French and the British Embassies that a delegation headed by People's Commissar for Defence Voroshilov had been appointed by the Soviet government to conduct military negotiations. The other members of the delegation were Shaposhnikov, Chief of the

¹ A.F.P. USSR.

² A.F.P. USSR.

General Staff of the Red Army, Kuznetsov, People's Commissar for the Navy, Loktionov, Chief of the Air Force, and Smorodinov, Deputy Chief of the General Staff.³ By that time the Soviet military authorities had completed a detailed plan for military cooperation between the USSR, Britain and France.⁴

According to French General Valin the Soviet government's appointment of "such an authoritative delegation, headed by Voroshilov himself" made a big impression in France.⁵

The British delegation consisted of Admiral Drax, Air Marshal Burnet and Major-General Heywood.

Soviet Ambassador in Britain Maisky wrote on August 1 that Drax's position as the King's adjutant on naval affairs was "honorary, but not active." "I think," Maisky wrote, "that judging from the posts they hold officially, the delegates will not be able to make any decisions on the spot and will have to refer everything to London. It is also suspicious that, again because of the kinds of posts they hold, the members of the delegation will be able to stay in Moscow indefinitely. This does not promise any particular speed in the conduct of the military negotiations, particularly after the Prime Minister's reference yesterday in Parliament to precedent (negotiations for the Anglo-Japanese alliance lasted 6 months, for the Anglo-French entente—9 months,

³ A.F.P. USSR.

⁴ The plan was presented at the meeting of the military representatives of three powers on August 15.

⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

for the Anglo-Russian entente—15 months, and so forth)." ⁶

The French military delegation included General Doumenc, member of the Supreme Military Council of France; General Valin, commander of the 3rd Air Force Division; Professor Willaume of the French Naval Academy and others. Soviet Ambassador in France Surits wrote to Moscow, referring to the make-up of the French mission, that the French government had evidently assigned a "modest programme" to it. "Its selection predominately of narrow specialists," Surits wrote, "is also witness to the inspection aims of the delegation—to their intention to find out, above all else, the condition of our army."⁷

The British military mission to Moscow was instructed, by means of a directive, to "go very slowly with the conversations" until such time as the political agreement had been reached. "The British Government," the directive stated, "is unwilling to enter into any detailed commitments which are likely to tie our hands in all circumstances. Endeavours should therefore be made to confine the military agreement to the broadest possible terms. Something on the lines of an agreed statement of policy may meet the case... If the Russians propose that the British and French governments should communicate to the Polish, Rumanian or Baltic states proposals involving cooperation with the Soviet government or General staff, the delegation should not commit themselves but refer home. The delegation should not discuss the defence of the Baltic

⁶ A.F.P. USSR.

⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

states, since neither Great Britain nor France have guaranteed these states.”⁸ This directive set the negotiations on a long course leading nowhere.

British Ambassador to the USSR Seeds, in a telegram to Halifax dated July 24, also suggested that the military negotiations “might be prolonged sufficiently to tide over the next dangerous few months.”⁹

On August 8, the US Embassy in London notified the US State Department that according to the Foreign Office the British military mission “has been told to make every effort to prolong its discussion until October 1.”¹⁰ The British government apparently felt that Germany would not start a war after October 1, because of autumn weather, and would postpone any new acts of aggression till the following spring.

The Soviet government, of course, knew nothing about the instructions received by the British military mission, but it was getting reports from various sources that the British and French governments, despite the many indications that Germany was preparing for new acts of aggression, were not really interested in a successful conclusion to negotiations with the USSR.

On August 2, 1939, the Soviet Ambassador in Paris informed Moscow that he had met with French Minister of Colonies Mandel. “Mandel has received information (not as a member of the cabinet—this question is not discussed in the cabinet),” the Ambassador wrote, “that the mis-

sion is leaving for Moscow without a worked-out plan. This is disturbing and casts doubt on the seriousness of their approach to the negotiations.” “The reason for all this,” Mandel told the Soviet Ambassador, “is that here and in London hopes of reaching an accommodation with Berlin are far from having been dismissed.”¹¹

WITHOUT AUTHORITY AND PLANS

As the military negotiations got under way, it became immediately apparent that, despite the fact that British and French military representatives had come to Moscow, the Munichmen were still not interested in cooperation with the USSR.

At the first meeting of the military mission,¹² on August 12, the head of the Soviet missions, Voroshilov, proposed that the delegations make public what powers they had. He read the text of the authorisation given to the Soviet military delegation on August 5 by the Soviet of People's Commissars. The document read that the Soviet delegation “is empowered to conduct negotiations with the British and French military missions and to sign a military convention on questions of organising the military defence of Great Britain, France and the USSR against aggression in Europe.”¹³

The head of the French delegation had creden-

¹¹ A.F.P. USSR.

¹² The transcripts of the meetings of the military missions of the three powers were printed in *International Affairs*, Nos. 2 and 3, 1959.

¹³ A.F.P. USSR.

⁸ D.B.F.P., Vol. VI, pp. 763-764 (Our italics.—Ed.).

⁹ D.B.F.P., Vol. VI, p. 461.

¹⁰ F.R.U.S., 1939, Vol. I, p. 294.

tials, dated August 3, which read that "General Doumenc is authorised to conduct negotiations with the Supreme Command of the Soviet Armed Forces on all questions relating to the cooperation which must be established between the armed forces of these two countries."¹⁴

Thus, the French delegation was empowered only to conduct negotiations, but not to sign any kind of agreement.

The head of the British delegation, Drax, said that he did not have written authorisation and that he "is empowered only to conduct negotiations, but not to sign a pact (convention)."¹⁵

Turning to the actual question of three-power cooperation, the head of the Soviet military mission asked the heads of the British and French missions to present their "proposals regarding measures which, in their opinion, must be taken to organise the defence of the contracting countries, that is, Britain, France and the Soviet Union." "Do the British and French missions have such plans?" he asked.¹⁶

Drax answered that having come to Moscow on the Soviet government's invitation he "presumed that a plan would be proposed by the Soviet mission."¹⁷

¹⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁵ A.F.P. USSR. The fact that the British delegation came to Moscow without credentials was particularly indicative, considering that on August 2, in a talk with the British and French Ambassadors, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs specifically raised the question of whether the British and French missions would arrive with appropriate powers. (D.B.F.P., Vol. VI, p. 570).

¹⁶ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

The head of the Soviet military mission explained that it would be more expedient to begin with a report of the British and French plans. "The Soviet Union," he said, "is in a somewhat different position as compared with Britain and France. The Soviet Union is not directly adjacent on the west to the aggressive bloc countries and therefore could be only second in line as a target for attack. Britain and France, however, and the countries with which Britain and France already have treaties, have common borders with the countries of the aggressive bloc, and, therefore, you would be the first to have some plans outlined against possible attacks by the aggressors." The head of the Soviet military mission pointed out that the Soviet side did not know what these plans were and therefore found it difficult to present its own plans.¹⁸

Although Drax did mention that Germany had already mobilised two million men and that August 15 was the date she had set for action, his further comments were limited to two questions which he said interested them:

"1. Of a possible war for Germany¹⁹ on two fronts.

"2. Of direct liaison between the armed forces of the USSR and those of the other states, that is, of Britain and France.

"If agreement on these two points can be reached, a great deal will have been accomplished."

Drax said that on the next day he would present for discussion "a general outline of our common goals."²⁰

¹⁸ A.F.P. USSR.

¹⁹ As worded in the original.

²⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

The head of the Soviet military mission replied to this by saying that the goal is clear: defence against the aggressive bloc in Europe. What had to be discussed then was "how to reach this goal."²¹

The head of the French delegation, General Doumenc, offered "three principles" for discussion:

"1. The formation of two solid fronts against the enemy on the west and on the east.

"2. Continuity of the fronts.

"3. The use of all forces against the enemy."²²

Thus, the very first meeting of the military missions showed that the British and French governments were not really serious about military negotiations with the USSR. The questions raised by Drax and Doumenc indicated that they intended to engage in abstract discussions, rather than reach agreement on the concrete problems of organising joint military resistance to the aggressors.

DOUMENC RESORTS TO DECEIT

At the morning session of August 13 the head of the Soviet military mission again stressed that the job of the military mission was to "establish the basis for a plan: the troop strength of the three powers, the material resources and the actual direction in which these forces are to operate."²³

²¹ A.F.P. USSR.

²² A.F.P. USSR.

²³ A.F.P. USSR.

At this meeting, General Doumenc stated that the French army consisted of 110 divisions. He also said that "if the bulk of the fascist forces are hurled against the western frontier, France will meet them with a strong and continuous front and, relying on her fortifications, will stem the enemy advance. Once the enemy has been stopped, the French army will concentrate its forces at points suitable for tank and artillery action and will launch a counterattack." By this time the French army would be reinforced by British forces, Doumenc noted. But he had to admit that he was "unfortunately not in a position to disclose" their size. "If the bulk of the fascist forces," Doumenc said further, "are directed against the eastern front, the Germans would have to leave no less than 40 divisions against France, in which event General Gamelin will advance against the Germans with all his forces."²⁴

* * *

Doumenc's announcement of France's intention to undertake offensive action against Germany, however, did not correspond to the facts, as became known later.

As mentioned earlier, the British delegation was operating on the basis of specific directives from London. A section covering the question of the West European front contained the following statement that "the action of the British and French forces in the West would contain considerable German forces on this front. Moreover, as soon as resources became available, the Allied forces would undertake an offensive, prob-

²⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

ably against Italy.”²⁵

Winston Churchill came to France on August 15, 1939, and spent ten days discussing military problems with Gamelin, Georges and other French military officials. He later had this to say about the atmosphere in France at that time: “What was remarkable about all I learned on my visit was the complete acceptance of the defensive which dominated my most responsible French hosts, and imposed itself irresistibly upon me. In talking to all these highly competent French officers, one had to sense that the Germans were the stronger, and that France had no longer the life-thrust to mount a great offensive. She would fight for her existence—*viola tout!*”²⁶

Hitler, meanwhile, as he was preparing his attack on Poland, was quite certain that he had no need to fear any action on the part of Britain and France. On August 22, at a meeting of German chief commanders and commanding generals, he said: “I experienced those poor worms Daladier and Chamberlain in Munich. They will be too cowardly to attack. They won’t go beyond a blockade.”²⁷

The Second World War that began soon thereafter showed what military plans France and Britain really had. They launched no offensive on the western front and gave no assistance to Poland when she was attacked by Hitler Germany.

²⁵ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 774.

²⁶ Winston S. Churchill. *The Second World War*, Vol. I, Boston, 1948, p. 384.

²⁷ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VII, p. 258.

BRITAIN CAN SUPPLY SIX DIVISIONS

At the evening meeting of the military missions in Moscow on August 13 General Heywood of the British delegation provided information on the British army. He said: “Our programme is to mobilise one echelon of 16 divisions to be ready for the first stage of the war. If war breaks out tomorrow, the numerical strength of our forces will be insignificant, but if in six months, the situation will be greatly changed.” When the Soviet military mission asked how many divisions Britain could send to France if war broke out tomorrow, and how quickly this could be done, Heywood answered: “Today Britain has five infantry divisions and one mechanised division, which have been brought up to full strength by young blood and are ready to be committed immediately.”²⁸

To the Soviet delegation’s questions “will Poland take part in a war on the side of France, with how many troops, and is there an understanding on this account with Poland?” Doumenc answered that Poland and France have a mutual assistance treaty, but that he “did not know the exact number of troops Poland is to provide.”²⁹

The French delegation submitted drafts of the Preamble and Articles 1 and 2 of a three-power military agreement.

²⁸ *A.F.P. USSR.*

French Premier Daladier told US Ambassador Bullitt in France on August 22, 1939, that “the British could not have a serious army ready for another two years” (*F.R.U.S.*, 1939, Vol. I, p. 302).

²⁹ *A.F.P. USSR.*

The draft of Article 1 read: "The three contracting parties have agreed that it is of fundamental importance to establish a continuous, stable and permanent front on the eastern borders of Germany as well as on her western borders."

Article 2 contained the following provisions: "With the aim of offering immediate resistance to the development of military actions by the common enemy, the three contracting powers agree to act with all their forces, air, ground and naval, on all enemy fronts where they can effectively fight to overthrow German might."

"The method of using these forces will depend on the decisions of the corresponding high commands. These decisions will be coordinated as events develop, but the first general goals are defined in the present agreement."³⁰

These were the first two articles of a draft Anglo-Franco-Soviet military agreement submitted by the British and French missions. The subsequent articles covered the following: the fundamental aims of the three powers are keeping open the communication lines between the various fronts (Article 3); cutting the supply lines to the enemy from other states (Article 4); rendering assistance to Turkey in the event of war in the Balkans (Article 5); adoption of joint military measures in the event of military operations spreading to the Balkan peninsula (Article 6); rendering assistance to Poland and Rumania at their request, particularly with air power, military supplies and advisers (Article 7); cooperation in supplying Poland, Rumania and Turkey with

³⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

ammunition and raw materials (Article 8); exchange of military missions in the event of war (Article 9).³¹

When Admiral Drax sent this draft agreement to London he wrote that an agreement such as this, which would contain only a "number of principles," "might contain very little."³²

At the end of the meeting, the Soviet delegation asked how the British and French military missions or the General Staffs of France and Great Britain "see the participation of the Soviet Union in a war against the aggressor if he attacked France or Britain, or if the aggressor attacks Poland or Rumania, or Poland and Rumania together, and also if the aggressor attacks Turkey. In a word, how do the British and French missions see our joint actions against the aggressor or a bloc of aggressors in the event of their action against us?" Clarifying this question, the head of the Soviet military mission reminded that the Soviet Union did not have common frontiers with either Britain or France and, therefore, its participation in a war was possible only on the territories of neighbouring states such as Poland and Rumania.³³

³¹ D.B.F.P., Vol. VII, pp. 595-597.

³² D.B.F.P., Vol. VII, p. 34, letter from Drax of August 16-17, 1939 (Our italics.—Ed.).

³³ A.F.P. USSR.

This question was not unexpected for the representatives of Britain and France. Strang had forewarned London on July 20, 1939 that "the military negotiations will probably not be brought to a conclusion until it can be agreed, for example, between the Soviet Union and Poland that the Soviet Union will have passage through at any rate a section of Polish territory in the event of a war in which Poland is involved on our

VOROSHILOV RAISES CARDINAL ISSUE

The head of the Soviet military mission, Voroshilov, began the meeting of August 14 by repeating the question: "How do the British and French missions see our joint actions against the aggressor?" General Doumenc replied that "The first task is for each to hold fast on his own front and to group his forces on this front." As for Poland, Rumania and Turkey, he said that "their job is to defend their own territory. But we must be ready to come to their aid when they ask for it."³⁴

Voroshilov asked what the French army proposed to do if these countries did not request assistance in good time, which would mean that they "put their hands up, that they gave in." Doumenc answered: "Then France will keep the forces she feels necessary on her front."³⁵

After hearing Doumenc out, the head of the Soviet military mission said that it was still not quite clear just what the position of the Soviet Union's armed forces was. "It is not clear on what territory they are to be deployed and how they are to physically participate in the common struggle." Doumenc, pointing on a map to the western border region of the USSR, answered that "this is the front on which the Soviet armed forces should be based." When the head of the

side" (*D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI., p. 425). The possibility that the Soviet side would raise the question concerning the passage of Soviet forces over Polish territory was also noted, as mentioned earlier, in the directives given to the British military mission.

³⁴ *A.F.P. USSR.*

³⁵ *A.F.P. USSR.*

Soviet delegation remarked that such an answer was inadequate, Doumenc became more specific by saying that Poland and Rumania "will need assistance with supplies" after they enter the war and "the USSR can do a lot along this line." He said further that this would also involve action against Germany by Soviet air force.³⁶

Doumenc's explanations indicated that Britain and France were not anticipating active participation by Soviet troops in giving assistance to Poland. To get absolute clarity on the question of joint three-power action, the head of the Soviet delegation asked the following questions:

"Do the General Staffs of Great Britain and France contemplate that Soviet land forces will be given entry to Polish territory in order to come into direct contact with the enemy if he attacks Poland? And further:

"Do you contemplate that our armed forces will be able to pass through Polish territory to meet and fight the enemy in southern Poland—through Galicia? And further:

"Is it contemplated to allow Soviet troops through Rumanian territory if the aggressor attacks Rumania? These are the three questions that interest us most."

The head of the Soviet military mission summed up his questions as follows: "Do the General Staffs of Britain and France contemplate that our troops will be given access to Eastern Prussia or other points in order to fight the common enemy?"³⁷

³⁶ *A.F.P. USSR.*

³⁷ *A.F.P. USSR.*

The head of the Soviet delegation stated further that in his opinion France and Britain must have had a precise conception of the USSR's part in the war. In this connection, the question of the Soviet Union's assistance to Poland and Rumania is "*a cardinal question.*" The head of the Soviet military mission expressed regret "that the military missions of Great Britain and France had not raised this question themselves and had not brought a precise answer to it."³⁸

Without giving a definite answer, Admiral Drax remarked that "if Poland and Rumania do not ask for assistance from the USSR, they will quickly become plain German provinces, and then the USSR will decide what approach to take with them."³⁹

The head of the Soviet military mission then showed on the map "how assistance actually can be given and how the Soviet Union can take part with its armed forces in the joint struggle against the aggressor." Without going into the substance of this proposal, Doumenc simply exclaimed: "This will be a decisive victory."⁴⁰

The head of the Soviet military mission stressed that admission of Soviet troops "to Polish territory through the Vilna corridor and Galicia and through Rumanian territory" comprises "the prerequisite condition for our negotiations and a joint agreement between the three states. If this does not come about, if this question is not resolved positively, then I have my doubts about the usefulness of our negotiations in general."

³⁸ A.F.P. USSR (Our italics—Ed.).

³⁹ A.F.P. USSR.

⁴⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

"I do not think it quite right to say, as General Doumenc and other representatives of the French and British military missions have said, that Poland and Rumania will ask for assistance themselves. They—Poland and Rumania—may or may not turn to the Soviet Union for assistance, or may delay in asking for assistance to such an extent that it would entail enormous and grave consequences for the British and French armies and their allies. We, at such a time, would not be in a position to bring appropriate influence to bear on events."

The head of the Soviet delegation said that he did not dispute Admiral Drax's opinion that Poland and Rumania would very quickly become provinces of aggressive Germany if they failed to ask for assistance from the USSR. However, it was not in the interests of Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union "that the supplementary armed forces of Poland and Rumania be destroyed. But if they, Poland and Rumania, should fail to ask for assistance from the Soviet Union in time, then, according to the Admiral's view, the armed forces of Poland and Rumania will be destroyed."

"For this reason the military mission of the Soviet Union insists that preliminarily, before we come to a final agreement on the documents which will result from our meetings, we resolve the question of the admittance of Soviet troops onto Polish territory (in the north and the south) and onto Rumanian territory."⁴¹

In response to this statement, General Hey-

⁴¹ A.F.P. USSR.

wood declared on behalf of the British and French military missions:

"We have already expressed our opinion with sufficient clarity and have taken under advisement the sum and substance of everything the Marshal has said. But it should not be forgotten that Poland and Rumania are independent states, and that, therefore, permission for the passage of Soviet armed forces must be received from their governments. This becomes a political question and the USSR should place it before the governments of Poland and Rumania. Quite obviously, this is the simplest and most direct way.

"However, if the Marshal strongly insists on his demand, we can contact London and Paris requesting that they put the following question to the governments of Poland and Rumania:

"If the Soviet Union becomes our ally would they permit Soviet troops to pass onto the territory of Poland in the area of the Vilna corridor and Galicia and also onto the territory of Rumania in order to cooperate in operations against Germany in the event of aggression on her part?"⁴²

The Soviet mission responded to the above at the end of the August 14 meeting with a statement advising that "the Soviet military mission has not forgotten that Poland and Rumania are independent states. On the contrary, it was on the basis of this unquestionable fact that the Soviet military mission has asked the British and French military missions to answer the question: will Soviet armed forces be allowed to

⁴² *A.F.P. USSR.*

pass through the territory of Poland (Vilna corridor and Galicia) and Rumania in the event of aggression against Britain and France or against Poland and Rumania?"

"Since the USSR," the Soviet statement continued, "does not have military treaties with Poland and Rumania, and inasmuch as it is primarily Poland, Rumania, France and Britain that are threatened with aggression in Europe, the question of permitting passage of Soviet armed forces over the territory of Poland and Rumania, as well as the question of the operations of the Soviet armed forces on the territory of these states, must be decided by the British and French governments in conjunction with the governments of Poland and Rumania." The Soviet military mission expressed regret that the British and French military missions did not have a precise answer to this question; it stated that "without a positive resolution of this question the whole undertaking of concluding a military convention between Britain, France and the USSR, in its opinion, is foredoomed to failure".⁴³

In informing London about the meeting, Seeds stressed that "the fundamental problem" of the negotiations was raised by the Soviet delegation and that the success or failure of the negotiations depended on its solution.⁴⁴

At the August 15 meeting, Admiral Drax announced that the British and French military missions had transmitted the Soviet military mission's statement to their governments and were now awaiting an answer.⁴⁵

⁴³ *A.F.P. USSR.*

⁴⁴ *D.B.F.P.* Vol. VII, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *A.F.P. USSR.*

SOVIET PLAN FOR THREE-POWER MILITARY COOPERATION

Chief of the Red Army General Staff Shaposhnikov then presented the Soviet military mission's ideas on joint operations by the armed forces of Britain, France and the USSR. He said that the USSR was putting up against aggression in Europe 120 infantry and 16 cavalry divisions, 5,000 heavy guns, 9,000-10,000 tanks and 5,000-5,500 combat aircraft.

Shaposhnikov outlined three alternatives for possible joint operations by the armed forces of the USSR, Britain and France in the event of aggression in Europe.

He said that if the aggressor attacked Britain and France (Alternative 1), "the USSR puts up a force equal to 70 per cent of the British and French forces sent directly against the main aggressor—Germany." If France and Britain deployed 90 infantry divisions directly against Germany, the USSR would put up 63 infantry and 6 cavalry divisions, with a corresponding amount of artillery, tanks and aircraft, with a total strength of about 2 million men. This plan required the participation of Poland with all her forces (in accordance with her treaties with Britain and France), 40-45 infantry divisions of which would have to be concentrated for the main effort on her western borders and against Eastern Prussia.

If the aggressor attacked Poland and Rumania (Alternative 2), it was assumed that these two countries would send all their forces to the front. Britain and France would have to take action and declare war on the aggressor immediately.

"In this event, the USSR puts up a force equal to 100 per cent of the armed forces which Britain and France send directly against Germany."

If the aggressor attacked the USSR through the Baltic countries (Alternative 3), the USSR would deploy 120 infantry and 16 cavalry divisions. "France and Britain must in this event provide a force equal to 70 per cent of the Soviet forces just indicated and immediately begin active operations against the main aggressor." The plan also required that Poland, tied by treaties with Britain and France, take action against Germany and put no less than 45 infantry divisions in the field.

The governments of Great Britain and France would have had to agree with Poland about permitting Soviet troops, in the instances indicated, to pass through strictly specified areas of its territory.⁴⁶

Drax, who was chairing this particular meeting, expressed gratitude to the Soviet military mission "for a clear and precise statement of the plan."⁴⁷

General Heywood of the British delegation wrote to the British War Ministry that from the statements made by the Soviet delegation it was quite clear that in the event of war the USSR did not wish "to adopt the defensive attitude which we were instructed to suggest... On the contrary... they (the Russians) expressed the wish to participate in offensive operations."⁴⁸

On August 16, the Anglo-Franco-Soviet nego-

⁴⁶ A.F.P. USSR.

⁴⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

⁴⁸ D.B.F.P., Vol. VII, pp. 600-601, Heywood's letter of August 17, 1939.

tiations were brought up during a talk between the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR and the American Ambassador to the USSR Steinhardt. "The Soviet government," Molotov said, "takes the situation in Europe and its negotiations with Britain and France with all seriousness. We attach great importance to these negotiations, as can be seen from the amount of time we have already devoted to them. From the very beginning we have approached the negotiations not as a matter that should end in the adoption of some kind of general declaration. We feel that to limit the matter to a declaration would not be right and, for us, unacceptable. For this reason, from the beginning of the negotiations and now, we look upon the question as one that should deal with concrete mutual assistance commitments aimed at counteracting possible aggression in Europe."⁴⁹

At the request of Admiral Drax, the head of the Soviet delegation spoke at the August 16 meeting on the "three principles" presented by the head of the French military mission on August 12.

"The Soviet military mission," he said, "has thoroughly studied the three principles presented by the head of the French military mission M. General Doumenc.

"These three principles of the defence of the contracting sides are too general, abstract, unsubstantial and do not commit anyone to anything. Of course, I agree with them, for it is difficult to object to them. But since there is nothing concrete about them, they can serve only as material for some kind of abstract declaration. We, how-

⁴⁹ A.F.P. USSR.

ever, have gathered here not to adopt a general declaration, but to work out a concrete military convention which should specify the number of divisions, artillery pieces, tanks, aircraft, naval squadrons, etc., which will operate jointly in the defence of the contracting countries."⁵⁰

To General Doumenc's remark that Marshal Voroshilov was "very strict" to his principles, the head of the Soviet military mission replied that the "harshness" of his reply was determined by "the harshness of the present military-political situation." It was only two days ago, he said, that Admiral Drax reported that Germany had already mobilised 2 million men and was ready to take action on August 15 against one of the peaceloving countries.⁵¹ "It follows from this that the meeting of the military missions of Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union, if they seriously want to come to a concrete decision on the question of joint operations against aggression, must, without wasting time on meaningless declarations, hasten to decide this fundamental question."⁵²

Pointing out that no answer had yet been received to the "cardinal question" raised by the Soviet side, the head of the Soviet military mission warned that the delegations would have to call off the meetings if the answer was too

⁵⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵¹ In regard to this statement by Voroshilov, Drax remarked that his words were possibly not quite accurately translated, since what he wanted to say was that Germany would be ready to take action any time after August 15. (A.F.P. USSR.)

⁵² A.F.P. USSR.

long in coming. "Our mission, unfortunately, cannot work jointly until such time as we know actually and not hypothetically how the governments of Great Britain and France look upon our participation in joint operations against the aggressor," the head of the Soviet mission said.⁵³

At the August 17 meeting, the Chief of the Soviet Air Force Loktionov reported on the air power of the Soviet Union and the Soviet military delegation answered questions put to it, whereupon the agenda of the meeting was exhausted. The head of the Soviet delegation stated that the further course of the meetings wholly depended on the receipt of an answer to the question put by the Soviet military mission to the military missions of Britain and France. He said that it seemed to him that "if no answer is received today or tomorrow from the governments of Britain and France, we will unfortunately have to interrupt our meetings for a while pending receipt of this answer."⁵⁴

On Drax's suggestion, a recess was called until August 21.⁵⁵

On August 19, TASS published an article refuting reports that had recently appeared in Polish newspapers to the effect that disagreement had arisen in the Moscow negotiations between the Soviet military delegation, on the one hand, and the French and British military missions, on the other, over alleged Soviet demands for British and French military assistance in the event of war in the Far East.

⁵³ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

⁵⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

"TASS is authorised to state that this information is pure fabrication from beginning to end and that the disagreements that do exist concern an entirely different question and have no relation to the question of the Far East."⁵⁶

CHAMBERLAIN MAKES NEW ADVANCES TO HITLER

In the middle of August reports appeared in the press of renewed efforts by British ruling circles to come to terms with Hitler and reports of a visit to Hitler on August 11 by the League of Nations High Commissioner of Danzig Burckhardt.

On August 16, the Soviet Ambassador in France telegraphed to Moscow that "Burckhardt's mission is now at the centre of attention." The Ambassador wrote that everyone who knew Burckhardt "excluded the possibility that he could have undertaken his trip without the knowledge and consent of London and Paris." "Though no one has any doubts as to the goals of the mission, there are differences of opinion as to what the results were. All that is known is that Burckhardt has called representatives of the Foreign Office and Quai d'Orsay (Arnal came to him from there) to Basle to acquaint them with the results."⁵⁷

The situation became so odious that Bonnet felt obliged on August 17 to invite the Soviet Ambassador to come to see him so that he could

⁵⁶ Pravda, Aug. 19, 1939.

⁵⁷ A.F.P. USSR.

"inform" him of Burckhardt's trip.⁵⁸ What Bonnet actually had to say about it, however, was not so much information as misinformation. Concealed from the Soviet government was the fact that during the meeting Hitler declared that he must have "a free hand in the East" and was ready to live in peace with Britain and cooperate with her; that Burckhardt expressed his assurance that all problems could be settled by negotiation and that "the Western powers are always ready to negotiate;" and that Burckhardt was supposed to inform London of Hitler's readiness to meet with representatives of the British government who could speak German, for example, General Ironside.⁵⁹

On August 14, 1939, British Labour Party official Buxton, on a special trip to Berlin, submitted to the German government, through Hetzler of the Ribbentrop Bureau, concrete proposals on fundamentals of a "possible settlement between Germany and Britain."⁶⁰ His proposals stipulated that Britain should

"a) recognise Eastern Europe as the natural lebensraum of Germany;

"b) settle the colonial question recognising Germany's right to her former colonies and immediately begin the formation of a new system in Central Africa, on the basis of the Berlin Con-

⁵⁸ *A.F.P. USSR.*

⁵⁹ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VI, pp. 693, 695-696.

⁶⁰ Hetzler wrote that Catchpool, who had accompanied Buxton, pointed out at the end of the talk that Buxton knew Chamberlain and Halifax and was very close to Butler, and that, therefore, it could be presumed that Buxton "would not make such proposals without a certain degree of approval from the government." (*A.D.A.P.*, Vol. VII, p. 81).

ference (1885) decisions, with a new partition of the territories...

"d) renounce all so-called encirclement alliances in Eastern Europe," etc.

In response, Germany should

"a) recognise the British Empire as the natural living space of Britain;

"b) enter into a system of European cooperation (for example, a conference of Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Poland, Spain) for a new settlement in Europe with joint guarantees of the new agreements, and to ensure the independence of all states..."⁶¹

As the danger of war mounted, British Ambassador to Germany Henderson, in a letter to Halifax on August 18, suggested that Chamberlain approach Hitler with a special absolutely secret message.⁶² Such a message from Chamberlain was sent on the night of August 22. Reminding Germany of the British guarantees to Poland, Chamberlain at the same time declared that the British government was ready to conduct negotiations with Germany covering "problems affecting the future of international relations, including matters of interest to us and to you."⁶³

Thus, the British government was continuing in its efforts to reach "broad agreement" with Germany. In return for certain guarantees to the British Empire, the British ruling circles were prepared to offer Germany a free hand in respect of the countries of Eastern Europe, i.e., agreed to another Munich (this time at the expense

⁶¹ *A.D.A.P.*, Vol. VII, pp. 81-82.

⁶² *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VII, pp. 68-69.

⁶³ *D.B.F.P.*, Vol. VII, pp. 127-128.

of Poland). In the final analysis, the British ruling circles thus hoped to push Germany against the USSR.

MILITARY TALKS DISRUPTED

Meanwhile, through the fault of the Britain and France, no progress was being made in the three-power military negotiations in Moscow.

On August 21, the British and French military missions, having received no answer from their governments to the question put by the Soviet delegation, proposed that the meeting set for August 21 be put off for two more days. The Soviet military mission proposed that the meeting be held as scheduled.

At the beginning of the meeting, the head of the British delegation, Admiral Drax, finally presented his credentials.

In the course of the meeting it was ascertained that the British and French missions still could not give an answer to the question of Soviet troops passage through the territories of Poland and Rumania. The head of the Soviet military mission then stated that as things stood "there is no practical need to meet until such time as the British and French missions receive answers from their governments." He said that if positive answers were received, "then we will have to call our meeting as soon as possible."⁶⁴

The representatives of the British and French missions tried to justify the delay in receiving an answer: to get answers to these questions they

⁶⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

had to communicate with their governments, who, in turn, had to communicate with the other governments.⁶⁵

In this connection, the head of the Soviet delegation made a statement in which he said that "the USSR, not having a common border with Germany, can render assistance to France, Britain, Poland and Rumania only on the condition that its troops are allowed passage through Polish and Rumanian territory, inasmuch as there are no other ways of coming into contact with the forces of the aggressor."

"The Soviet military mission," he said in this statement, "cannot understand how the governments and General Staffs of Britain and France, in sending their missions to the USSR to negotiate a military convention, could have failed to give precise and positive instructions on such a simple question as the passage and operations of Soviet armed forces against the aggressor on the territory of Poland and Rumania, with which Britain and France have respective political and military ties.

"If, however, the French and British turn this axiomatic question into a big problem that requires lengthy study, it means that there are grounds to doubt their desire for real and serious military cooperation with the USSR. ✕

"In view of the above, responsibility for delay in the military negotiations naturally lies with the French and British sides"⁶⁶

The head of the Soviet military mission stated further that if the British and French mis-

⁶⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

⁶⁶ A.F.P. USSR.

sions did receive a positive answer to the questions raised by the Soviet side, "the Soviet military mission will be ready to meet to consider those questions which we merely outlined and which still required detailed discussion."⁶⁷

DOUMENC ON SLIPPERY GROUND

On August 22, 1939, the head of the French military mission Doumenc sent a letter to the head of the Soviet military mission saying that he had received from the French government "permission to give an affirmative reply to the question put by the Soviet delegation."⁶⁸

Doumenc's letter was actually an attempt to mislead the government of the USSR, inasmuch as the question of Soviet troops' passage over Polish and Rumanian territory in the event of war was actually still unsettled.

On August 22, Doumenc paid a visit to the head of the Soviet military mission and announced that he had been informed by his government that "the answer to the basic, cardinal question is positive."

The head of the Soviet military mission immediately asked about the position of the British government, but got no answer. The head of the Soviet delegation also asked "what position in this whole matter do the Polish and Rumanian governments take. Are they abreast of the situation" or was the French government's answer

⁶⁷ A.F.P. USSR

⁶⁸ A.F.P. USSR.

given "without the knowledge of Poland and Rumania." Doumenc replied that he did not know.

The head of the Soviet military mission then stressed that eleven days had passed since the beginning of the talks, but that the whole matter had amounted to "marking time." "Therefore," he said, "it is impossible for me to agree to take part in further meetings until such time as all official answers are received. I do not doubt that the General has received a positive answer from his government. But the positions of Poland, Rumania and Britain are not known. Therefore our further work can amount to only talk, which in politics can bring only harm." The head of the Soviet delegation also stressed that if the Poles gave their consent to the passage of Soviet troops through the territory of Poland, they would certainly demand to take part in the negotiations—their General Staff would not want to remain on the outside during consideration of questions which so closely relate to Poland.

The head of the Soviet military mission said that they should wait and meet when there was an answer from the British government and the position of Poland and Rumania became clear. "These answers must contain a precise indication that Poland knows about this, it would be an answer of the British and French governments coordinated with the Polish and Rumanian governments." "What we have asked to be clarified," the People's Commissar for Defence said, "gives us nothing but heavy commitments—to bring up our troops and fight the common enemy. Do we really have to beg to be given the right to fight our common enemy?! Until all the-

se questions are clarified there can be no negotiations."

At the end of the talk, the People's Commissar repeated: "When the matter is fully clarified and all the replies have been received, then we will go to work."⁶⁹

However, inasmuch as the British and French military missions did not receive a clear reply—one coordinated with Poland and Rumania—from their governments on the question of permitting passage of Soviet troops through Polish and Rumanian territory for the purpose of engaging in military operations against Germany, the negotiations of the military missions in Moscow were never resumed.

Thus, the military negotiations showed conclusively that it was impossible to reach an agreement with Britain and France on an effective and dependable mutual assistance pact which would provide for collective action against aggression and ensure peace in Europe and the security of the USSR. The Soviet Union was left isolated in the face of Nazi aggression which threatened at any moment to break through to the border of the USSR.

WAR MENACE ON THE SOVIET UNION'S FAR EASTERN BORDER

The situation on the Far Eastern borders of the Soviet Union was also fraught with danger. The Japanese militarists, despite the defeat in 1938, at Lake Hasan, renewed military actions in May

⁶⁹ A.F.P. USSR.

1939, by sending their troops to the River Khalkhin Gol region on the territory of the Mongolian People's Republic. Meeting their obligations under the Soviet-Mongolian Mutual Assistance Pact, Soviet troops came to the aid of the MPR. In the summer of 1939, bitter fighting broke out between Soviet and Japanese forces.

On June 30, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR wrote to the Soviet Ambassador in France relative to the events on the River Khalkhin Gol: "The Japano-Manchurian provocations in Mongolia are, according to our information, an attempt, made at the insistence of Germany and Italy, to demonstrate Japan's military might. These Japanese actions were designed to hamper the conclusion of an Anglo-Franco-Soviet agreement by frightening Britain and France away from this agreement. The patent failure suffered by the Japanese in this matter should have an effect opposite to that intended by the Germans and Italians."⁷⁰

While Soviet troops were repulsing the Japanese aggressors, the British government was pursuing a policy of connivance with aggression in the Far East as well as in Europe. This became particularly clear in connection with the so-called Tientsin conflict.⁷¹

⁷⁰ A.F.P. USSR.

⁷¹ The Tientsin conflict between Britain and Japan had to do with a Japanese demand for the extradition by the authorities of the British concession in Tientsin of four Chinese nationals, accused by the Japanese of killing a Chinese who had collaborated with Japan. It was Japan's way of wresting from Britain recognition of Japanese military organs as the legal power on occupied Chinese territory.

On June 24, the Soviet Ambassador in London informed Moscow that the British government's position in relation to the events in Tientsin "is becoming increasingly capitulatory." He said that there was every reason to expect that settlement of the conflict would "go the way of Munich."⁷²

Regarding the interconnection between the Anglo-German and Anglo-Japanese negotiations on the one hand, and the Moscow negotiations on the other, the Soviet Ambassador to France stated in his July 25 dispatch to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that "the correctness of our position in the negotiations has become particularly clear to everyone in the light of the Hudson-Wohltat talks and the capitulatory Anglo-Japanese agreement."⁷³ "Everyone who honestly supports an agreement with us is asking himself," the Ambassador wrote, "what faith can Moscow have in the negotiators when at the very time of the negotiations a bridge is being laid for an agreement with Germany, and when during a military conflict between the USSR and Japan, shameful advances are made to Japan."⁷⁴

Large-scale fighting between Soviet and Japanese troops broke out in the second half of August 1939; enemy casualties for July and August in the battles on the River Khalkhin Gol were 18,868 killed and 25,900 wounded.⁷⁵

⁷² A.F.P. USSR.

⁷³ On July 24, an Anglo-Japanese agreement was published in which the British government actually recognised the Japanese occupants as the legal power on the Chinese territory they had seized.

⁷⁴ A.F.P. USSR.

⁷⁵ See *History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941-1945*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1960, p. 244.

The Soviet Union dealt a crushing blow to the Japanese aggressors on the River Khalkhin Gol, demonstrating faithfulness to its internationalist duty and its treaty obligations.

The routing of the Japanese forces on the River Khalkhin Gol, however, did not put an end to the conflict. The Japanese aggressors refused to accept defeat and discontinue military operations.

In the meantime, the Japanese government was making concerted efforts to conclude a military alliance between Japan, Germany and Italy against the USSR. It assured the German government that in the event of war between Germany and the USSR Japan was ready to take action against the Soviet Union.

Thus the Soviet state was confronted with the imminent danger of war in Europe and the Far East simultaneously—and without allies.

US ATTITUDE—CONNIVANCE AT AGGRESSION

The United States could under the circumstances play a major role in preserving peace, both in Europe and, particularly, in the Far East, where the aggressors were placing US interests in immediate jeopardy. The USA, however, was in an isolationist mood, an American version of connivance at aggression. In the summer of 1939, US Congress debated amendments in the US neutrality acts, and rejected them all. For the victims of aggression this was an end of hopes to purchase US military equipment, to say nothing of direct military aid. US Ambassador in Belgium, Davies, described the Congress deci-

sions as help to aggressors, a "definite factor" encouraging them to commit new acts of violence in near future.⁷⁶ The Polish Ambassador in Berlin, Lipski, pointed out that the Congress decisions had an "eminently encouraging effect" on the Hitlerites.⁷⁷

The US government, no doubt, could influence the British and French governments towards concluding an agreement with the USSR. But it failed to do so. The possibility of US participation in talks with the USSR to set up a united front against aggression had not even been discussed: together with Britain and France, the US was bent on connivance with the aggressor.

FORCED DECISION

In the face of the threat from Germany, the Soviet Union did everything possible to conclude a comprehensive and effective military-political anti-aggression pact with Britain and France. Such a pact under those conditions could have forced the aggressors to come to reason and could have preserved the peace and prevented war both in Europe and elsewhere. However, the negotiations showed that Britain and France had no desire to conclude a pact, that they were playing a game of pact negotiations; they proposed that the Soviet Union take on far-reaching commitments but did not, in turn, want to help the Soviet Union, if it was attacked, i.e., they did not want an equitable and mutually beneficial agreement. The ruling

⁷⁶ *F.R.U.S.*, 1939, Vol. I, pp. 664-665.

⁷⁷ *F.R.U.S.*, 1939, Vol. VI, p. 207.

circles of Britain and France during that period wanted only one thing: to prod German aggression against the USSR. This was the whole idea behind the big political game they were playing.

Under the circumstances, the only way to preserve the security of the USSR—at least for a time—was for the Soviet government to accept the proposal made at that particular time by the German government to sign a non-aggression pact on its own.

It was in the spring of 1939 that the German government had first begun to show an interest in normalising relations with the USSR. The Soviet government made no response to the numerous feelers put out by German representatives on this question. On August 4, German Ambassador in Moscow Schulenburg wrote to Berlin relative to this question that his general impression was that the Soviet government "is firmly resolved to reach an agreement with Britain and France."⁷⁸

In view of the futility of its attempts to reach an agreement with Britain and France on the creation of a collective peace front against aggression, and considering the danger of war simultaneously in the West and the East, in conditions of isolation and without allies, the Soviet government was finally forced to sign a Soviet-German non-aggression pact.⁷⁹

By concluding the non-aggression pact with Germany, the Soviet Union avoided a war on two fronts under extremely adverse international conditions and gained time to better prepare for a

⁷⁸ *A.D.A.P.*, Vol. VI, p. 894.

⁷⁹ *Pravda*, August 24, 1939.

possible attack by the aggressor. As properly stated in the historical survey, *Falsifiers of History*, the signing of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact was "a far-sighted and wise step of Soviet foreign policy under the situation prevailing at the time."⁸⁰

That the Soviet government, during the whole course of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet talks in 1939, had shown the deepest interest in concluding a three-power agreement and that the signing of a non-aggression pact with Germany was a step that was forced upon the Soviet government, were facts that even the French military attaché in the USSR, General Palasse, could not help acknowledging. "I still think," he wrote on August 23 to Paris, "that for the USSR the solution to the problem, in the sense of an agreement with Germany, is a way out only if the worst comes to the worst and, perhaps, also a way of applying pressure for a more speedy formation of a stable, well-knit coalition which, I have always felt, is what the Soviet leaders want."⁸¹ On August 27, Palasse again wrote regarding the Soviet Government's position: "I still contend that, apprehensive of an excessive build-up of Germany, it would prefer an agreement with France and Britain, if only it could be achieved on the conditions clearly defined during the military negotiations."⁸²

⁸⁰ *Falsifiers of History. A Historical Survey*, Moscow, 1948, p. 53.

⁸¹ *History of the USSR*, 1962, No. 3, pp. 22-23. (Russ. Ed.).

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

EPILOGUE

On August 25, the head of the British military mission in Moscow, Drax sent Voroshilov the following letter: "I am writing this letter to say good-bye and to inform you that in accordance with instructions received from our authorities, the British and French military missions are leaving Moscow tonight."⁸³

On the same day, the heads of the British and French military missions, Drax and Doumenc, paid a visit to Voroshilov. During their conversation, the head of the Soviet military mission said: "Unfortunately, we were not able to come to an agreement this time. Let us hope that next time our work will be more successful."⁸⁴

On the following day, August 26, 1939, Chinese Ambassador in Moscow Yan-Tse, in a talk with Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Lozovsky, said that he had received word from his government that it welcomed the conclusion of a Soviet-German non-aggression pact, inasmuch as "this pact will strengthen the Soviet Union and be without a doubt a blow to Japan."

In answer to the Ambassador's question on whether or not the Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations would continue, the Deputy People's Commissar said that "the negotiations with Britain and France were conducted over a period of

⁸³ *A.F.P. USSR*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

five months; the departure of the delegations is one episode of these negotiations. Delegations come and go, but the question of the struggle for peace remains. Their departure is not a result of a non-aggression pact being concluded between the USSR and Germany, but the result of a lack of agreement on a number of questions. If Britain and France accept the Soviet government's proposals, there still might be a possibility of concluding an agreement with them. . . . At the present time, the negotiations are broken off, and their renewal depends on Britain and France."⁸⁵

Speaking of the causes for the suspension of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet military negotiations, Voroshilov, when interviewed by the newspaper *Izvestia*, said that "the military negotiations with France and Britain reached a dead end in view of unsurmountable disagreements." "The Soviet military mission," he said, "felt that the USSR, not having a common border with the aggressor, can render assistance to France, Britain and Poland only on the condition that its troops are allowed passage through Polish territory, for there are no other ways that Soviet troops could come into contact with the forces of the aggressor. Just as the British and American forces in the First World War could not have taken part in military cooperation with the armed forces of France if they had not been given the opportunity to operate on the territory of France, so the Soviet armed forces would not be able to take part in military cooperation with the armed forces of France and Britain if they are not given entry to the territory of Poland.

⁸⁵ A.F.P. USSR.

"Despite the manifest correctness of such a position, the French and British military missions did not agree with this position taken by the Soviet mission, and the Polish government openly declared that it does not need and will not accept assistance from the USSR.

"This situation has made military cooperation between the USSR and these countries impossible.

"This is the basis of the disagreements. This is what caused the negotiations to break down."⁸⁶

* * *

The documents briefly reviewed here give ample evidence that the Soviet government, during the whole course of the Anglo-Franco-Soviet talks in 1939, made sincere efforts to conclude an effective mutual assistance pact against aggression with Britain and France, a pact which could have checked the aggressors and formed a collective front in the defence of peace in Europe, and, in the event of war, assured victory over the aggressors.

The Soviet government, as is seen from the documents, clearly understood the insidious plans of the Munichmen whose only aim was to direct German aggression against the USSR. Knowing that after Munich a sobering process was taking place in Britain and France due to continued aggressive acts being perpetrated by the fascist powers, the Soviet government remained patient and did not lose hope that Britain and France would finally change for the better. However, the Munichmen, blinded by their class hatred of the

⁸⁶ *Izvestia*, August 27, 1939.

Soviet Union, were in no condition to make a sober appraisal of events as they developed. By playing their double game they brought the Moscow negotiations between the USSR, Britain and France into a cul-de-sac and wrecked the chances of forming a collective front in defence of peace against fascist aggression in Europe.

М. Панкратова, В. Сиполс
Почему не удалось предотвратить войну
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Цена 41 коп.